

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1353902



The Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT

STUDIES IN THE
EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

BY

H. LEFROY YORKE, M.A., B.D.

London

CHARLES H. KELLY

25-35 CITY ROAD, AND 26 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

FIRST EDITION 1910

TO
MY FRIEND
JOSEPH BIBBY

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	IMMORTAL FRIENDSHIPS	9
II.	LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE	23
III.	PROVIDENCE	43
IV.	CATHOLICITY	59
V.	THE LIFE INDEED	77
VI.	A CITIZEN OF TWO WORLDS	89
VII.	THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING	107
VIII.	OURSELVES AND OTHERS	123
IX.	JESUS AS LORD	139
X.	WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION	155
XI.	LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE	173
XII.	THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT	189
XIII.	KNOWING CHRIST	205
XIV.	SPIRITUAL PROGRESS	219
XV.	THE BODY THAT SHALL BE	235
XVI.	UNITY	251
XVII.	RELIEF FROM CARE	267
XVIII.	PEACE A DEFENCE	283
XIX.	THE INFLUENCE OF OUR THOUGHTS	299

THE Epistle to the Philippians has been aptly called 'the love-letter' of the Pauline epistles. The love of the Philippians for their apostle shows itself practically in the gift for which Paul sends his thanks in this epistle, and the epistle itself breathes from first to last the warmest love for this congregation, which of all the congregations he had founded lay nearest to his heart. Written from the heart, the letter bears no didactic character. Even the few theological excursions, which are introduced here and there, upon the person of Christ and justification, serve practical ends. At the same time we get painted for us the outward situation of the apostle during his last days, imprisoned, forsaken, distressed; and we are enabled to learn the moods and feelings which moved him as he came close to death. The soft, charitable tone of the apostle's judgement even upon his Judaistic opponents is to be easily explained by his mood at the moment; and at such a crisis in his life the invitation to rejoice, which again and again he issues to his Philippians, comes with a specially affecting power. As an expression of the apostle's final counsels and warnings, his final wishes and prayers, his final hopes and fears, the letter may be described as the testament which he left to his best-loved congregation.—LIPSIVS (cit. Moffatt, *The Historical New Testament*).

I

IMMORTAL FRIENDSHIPS

‘I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you’

i. 3.

I.

IMMORTAL FRIENDSHIPS

THIS letter is the least formal and the most beautiful of St. Paul's epistles. It is marred by no controversies such as disturbed him in his communications with other churches. We have in it a picture, not of the theologian battling against errors, but of a loving friend writing to distant friends, deeply grateful for their kindness, and anxious for their welfare. Almost every sentence affords an insight into the apostle's large and generous nature : his capacity for sympathy ; the refinement of his thought and feeling ; and the union of tenderness and strength which has made him a pattern of the perfect Christian gentleman.

It might have been supposed that one like St. Paul, so raised above ordinary men, and

living in such nearness to the other world, would have been indifferent to earthly friendships ; that he would have felt no dependence upon human sympathy. In this epistle he says he has learned to be content under all conditions, and to be independent of outward circumstances. But though he can exist without comforts, he cannot live without love. No hardship could crush his spirit, but to be deprived of the affection of friends was more than could be endured. The interests which bound him to the earth were few, and he lived in the hourly expectation of their being dissolved. 'The Lord is at hand.' But while holding the things of this world loosely he clings to his friends as inseparable from his life. To another church he writes : ' We were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us.'¹

St. Paul felt that there was something immortal in friendship. 'Love is of God, and love never faileth, for God is love.' The fickleness of worldly friendships is proverbial.

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 8.

One of the wisest of the ancients remarked that 'Fate has decreed that there shall be no friendship among the evil.' Self-interest and sordid aims are no true bond of union. Jesus Christ, by breathing into humanity a higher spirit, and enabling us to perceive 'the things by which men live,' has done more than all else to draw hearts together, and strengthen the ties of friendship. Unlike the philosophers of Greece, the New Testament writers had little to say regarding the rules and duties of friendship. They were more concerned about creating the atmosphere in which it might grow, and where communion of the spirit would be natural and necessary.

What was it that formed so deep a friendship between St. Paul and the Philippians? A few years ago they were strangers to each other. They possessed little in common. No intellectual sympathies drew them together; no ties of race or blood united them. The account of St. Paul's first visit to Philippi shows how cosmopolitan was its character.¹ Among his converts were the representatives

¹ Acts xvi.

of various races and religions. Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, was an Asiatic, a seller of purple, in well-to-do circumstances, a proselyte to Judaism. The slave girl was a Greek, a poor ignorant creature, possessed with the spirit of Python, which was believed to be the source of Greek inspiration. In the jailer we see the Roman official, representing a religion of law. But all these estranging barriers disappeared in the presence of Christ. A new spirit arose, deeper than race or custom, which united them to each other and to the apostle.¹

And in this letter the apostle pours forth his love. They had given him freely of their affection, and he responds to it with impassioned feeling. It shows how, beneath the outward austerity of his life and its rigorous self-denial, there was a depth of emotion and tenderness and a craving for sympathy and love.

The apostle's chief interest and joy was in the spiritual progress of his friends: as for their worldly troubles, these might become a

¹ See Lightfoot, *Phil.* p. 54.

blessing ; but loss of Christian character was an unrelieved sorrow. With what intense satisfaction does he follow every sign of their advancement in the divine life ! It was always for this that he poured out his heart in thankfulness. He blesses God for the strong faith of the Romans, and for the love shown to the saints by the Ephesians, for the patience under persecution of the Thessalonians, and for the fellowship in the faith of the Philippians.

In this we discover one great secret of the apostle's influence. His deep and loving sympathy led him to see the best that is in every one, and to bestow unstinted encouragement and praise wherever it was possible. Human nature will generally give us that which we expect from it. As Thoreau remarks, ' In our daily intercourse with men, our nobler faculties are dormant and suffered to rust. None will pay us the compliment to expect nobleness from us. Though we have gold to give, they demand only copper.' The apostle made high demands upon human nature. He appealed to the deepest life of

the spirit. 'If there is therefore any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, fulfil ye my joy.'¹

Yet he was under no illusions. His watchful eye was quick to detect any symptoms of moral relapse. In his beloved church at Philippi he noted with anxiety more than the germs of self-will and pride. But he strives to overcome the evil by affirming the good. He does not censure their faults, but praises their virtues. If he glances for a moment at any weakness, it is only to bring into light the opposite quality. He speaks not of selfishness but of love, not of strife but of union. He dwells not upon the harshness and cruelty of pride, but upon the gentleness and beauty of humility. He holds up to their view the example of Christ, and urges them to keep Christ in their thoughts till they become like Him.

It is a deep principle of moral training always to affirm the good. Let a mother suggest anger to an irritable child, and it

¹ ii. 1-2.

becomes more ungovernable ; let her speak of gentleness and peace, and its mind is calmed. A servant who is trusted will try to be worthy of trust, but one who is viewed with suspicion will sink to that which he is thought to be. We are saved by the faith which others have in us, as well as by our own faith. ‘Blessed is he that shall save us from self-contempt.’ To be believed in is often a moral resurrection. It is the highest service that our friends can render us.

How strongly does the apostle affirm his faith in his fellow Christians at Philippi! They have always been obedient, and he is certain they will continue to be so in his absence.¹ He entertains no doubt concerning their salvation. He is confident that God, who began the good work, will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.² ‘It is right,’ he says, ‘for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart.’³ Love never lets go. It believeth all things ; and if facts are against it, it hopeth all things.

No mother could write to her absent children

¹ ii. 12.

² i. 6.

³ i. 7.

in more affecting words than those which St. Paul addressed to his friends at Philippi. 'Beloved and longed for, my joy and crown.'¹ 'God is my witness how I long after you all.'² But if I cannot be with you it is a relief to hear of your welfare, and to that end 'I hope speedily to send Timothy unto you, that I may be comforted when I know your state.'³ In the meantime, though far apart in bodily presence, let us meet often at the throne of grace. You are always with me in my prayers, and I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you. I know that you pray for me. I am confident that these trials which have come upon me will turn to my salvation through your prayers.⁴

Is it not surprising to find an inspired apostle confessing his dependence upon the prayers of those whom his ministry had rescued from heathenism—that one so much above them in spiritual attainment and knowledge could be helped and blessed by their supplications? And if St. Paul asked for the intercession of his converts, ought not we to

¹ iv. i.² i. 8.³ ii. 19.⁴ i. 19.

desire the prayers of one another? We value the kind thoughts and loving wishes of our friends, and feel them to be a source of strength. How much more helpful when the tender thoughts and affection pour themselves forth at the throne of grace on our behalf! This is the enduring bond of true love. Friendships which arise from lower interests soon wither; but those that are rooted in the spirit flourish with time, and strengthen in adversity. St. Paul prays for them, and they pray for him. Each desires the highest good of the other, and both seek the things of Christ. The apostle prays that their love may abound more and more in knowledge and discernment; they pray that his present trials may turn to his salvation.

And the spirit of oneness in Christ unites them in everything else. Their love overflows in kind deeds and practical service. They affectionately ministered to the apostle's needs. And though it was his rule to be independent, and not to accept contributions, yet he tells them that in their case he made an exception, because their offerings were an

expression of love. A sensitive man like St. Paul would have shrunk from gifts of charity, but love consecrates everything, and that which would have hurt him as a contribution cheers and comforts him as an act of affection.

Every true gift between friends is of the nature of a sacrament: it is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. St. Paul speaks of their gift as a sacrifice well pleasing to God, for that which is presented to men in love is really offered to God.

And not only did they help him in material things, but they sent him sympathy; they shared the burden of his sorrows and felt them as their own. How grateful to the apostle must have been the love and loyalty of these people! Far away in his Roman captivity, with the care of all the churches pressing upon him, his drooping spirits would be often cheered by the knowledge that friends at a distance were feeling with him and praying for him. The outbursts of trust and gladness so noticeable in this epistle owed more than we can tell to the joy of human sympathy and love. When St. Paul first visited Philippi he

thought only about helping these people. It probably never occurred to him that they would one day be a strength and support to him. He simply desired to do them good. It is an example of how all the good that we do, or strive to do, comes back in blessing upon ourselves.

People sometimes say that they have few friends, and that as they grow older the number is becoming less. They complain that life is solitary. But is there any reason why we should be loved? Have we taken a kind interest in others? Have we sown love as we went along? St. Paul had friends everywhere, and he made most of them when he had passed middle life. Those of earlier years he had given up. Since Christ had changed his view of things he felt the emptiness of worldly friendship. He turned from the self-satisfied Pharisees, with their formalism and social pretensions, to these simple-hearted people, with their earnest faith and loyalty to Christ. In their friendship he found the solace of his old age. And though they were far from him in bodily presence they were close to him in

spirit, with him in all his thoughts and prayers.

In the friendship of the soul nothing can come between. Distance or death may withdraw the loved ones from our view, but communion is still open ; and in quiet intervals, perhaps in the night watches, our hearts warm as we think of them. The thought of our departed friends should never be allowed to sink us in sorrow. Rather should we thank God, in all our remembrance of them, for the joy that they added to our life ; for the immortal love which they awakened ; for the hopes and affections that they have carried with them into the unseen, and for the deeper intimacy that is now possible.

II

LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE

‘And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere.’—i. 9-10. .

II

LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE

It does not require an inspired apostle to bring home to us in these days the importance of knowledge. The warning comes from many quarters that the uninstructed have no chance in the race of life. Leaders of industry are emphatic in declaring that the stress of competition is driving out those of untrained intelligence ; and a Cabinet Minister recently stated that we had more to fear from the schools than from the Dreadnoughts of the Continent.

But under the strain of modern life there has arisen a new and serious danger, that of viewing knowledge exclusively from the business and professional standpoint. The child has to be trained, not for living, but for making a living ; it is regarded as a tool to be

fashioned for practical use, rather than as a living creature whose highest value is to be found in its own development.

It is one of the chief distinctions of the ancient Greeks that they taught that moral and intellectual improvement must go on together, and that to train head and heart apart from each other brought injury to both. The Christian religion, which has inspired all that is highest in thought and culture, also insists upon the harmonious development of our faculties. If in the New Testament the claims of the intellect appear to fall into the background, it is only because our Lord and His apostles desired to rivet attention upon the neglected truth that character is the foundation of knowledge.

This fact must be kept in view in the passage before us. The apostle urges the Christians at Philippi to cultivate their intelligence, and to strive after enlightened thoughts of God, of themselves, and of the world. But he reminds them that the starting-point of knowledge is in the soul. It is love that is to abound in knowledge.

All true perception and intelligence have their source in our spiritual life. The deeper knowledge of which he speaks is not simply book knowledge. Books are indeed among life's greatest gifts, and most of us would lead happier and better lives if we used them more wisely. What a difference it would make if only we read a little each day, not merely for amusement, nor for the sake of information, but for the improvement of the mind and character!

To store the memory with facts, though useful, is not knowledge in the higher sense. Our subject refers rather to the knowledge which sees into the heart of things, and which results from inward illumination as well as from reading and study. It is knowledge which advances with the growth and expansion of our faculties. Its most vital quality is the power of judgement and discrimination. It pierces through illusions, and discerns the real value of things. No sophistry can deceive it. With the clearness of intuition it distinguishes the true from the false, the good from the evil. In matters of right and wrong, where

it seems difficult to draw the line, it does not need to fall back upon laws and usages for guidance, nor borrow light from rules of conduct, for it apprehends the facts of the case by immediate perception. And it opens the mind to all that is noble and beautiful, and enables us not only to perceive the things that are good, but to distinguish amongst them those which are best. To an ordinary observer certain lines of conduct or competing works will all appear equally good, but the trained and sensitive mind will perceive the finer shades of excellence in some.

It is the power of discrimination and insight that marks the highest order of mind. 'Let us try in this matter of education,' wrote Matthew Arnold, 'to ask the right questions and not the wrong, not whether a school teaches Greek or natural science, but whether a boy carries away from it a finer character, a more trained and serious intelligence, than boys from another school. Let us try to prefer the capacity for thinking to the showy achievements of memory which have so often killed mind, and to honour taste and judgement

which perceive the relations and varying value of knowledge, above the superficial cleverness which displays all alike, with equal interest or equal indifference.'

In the affairs of life the person who commands our confidence is not the clever man, but the one who is known to possess a sound judgement. In difficult situations we look for guidance to him who can see underlying principles, and who, putting aside what is trivial and external, can grasp the essential facts. This is the power that brings distinction and achievement in every department of human life. It gives intelligence to the man of business and far-sighted sagacity to the statesman, it is the secret of the physician's skill and of the scholar's wisdom.

But insight and judgement are amongst the rarest of attainments. Even great learning does not ensure clearness of perception, and sometimes those who are reputed to have mastered a subject appear blind to its most obvious truths. Long ago it was observed that 'Wisdom' walked abroad amongst the haunts of men, 'stood in the openings of the

gates,' 'in the street,' 'in the chief places of the concourse,' 'on the top of high places,' and 'at the entry of the city,' yet no man regarded. Great truths lie all around us awaiting the opening of our faculties. These faculties are latent in all men. Just as every normally constituted human being is born with physical senses, so he is possessed of spiritual organs. But while the bodily senses are continually employed and trusted, the faculties of the soul are dormant and neglected. Sometimes they wake at the touch of thought, beauty, or love, and the whole inner life is flooded with light. Even the outer world is then seen under a different aspect.

To believe and follow what the soul teaches us in these moments of power and illumination is to have faith. A believer is not one who consents to a certain system of thought, but one who trusts and obeys his spiritual faculties. These faculties are inlets of knowledge more profound than that which is received through the intellect and bodily senses.

For what is knowledge? To be acquainted with names and events and laws, and the

physical properties of things, is knowledge only in the more superficial meaning of the word. Strictly speaking, whether in soul or sense, we know only that which we are. To know the persons whom we meet every day, something more is necessary than to regard them with the eye of an anatomist. They are understood only as we interpret them through sympathy, by entering into their joys and sorrows and aspirations, and realizing their life in our own. Acquaintance with language alone does not enable us to perceive the beauty and power of literature. To know all about the rules of grammar, to be able to parse and analyse correctly, will not unlock for us the depths of thought and feeling in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, or in Shakespeare's dramas. To be an authority on New Testament Greek will not in itself confer insight into the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount. These mighty truths that have moved the ages have been conceived in the depths of the soul, and only through the soul can their power be felt and understood.

The world around us is intelligible only as

it is viewed through sympathy and love. Nature is able to convey more exalted truths than those which are contained in any textbook. To the Wanderer in Wordsworth's *Excursion* the revelation was so clear and powerful, that outward things vanished from his thoughts and he was conscious only of the spiritual. 'In such high hour of visitation from the living God, thought was not.' 'Rapt into still communion . . . his mind was a thanksgiving to the Power that made it.' 'In the silent faces (of the clouds) he read unutterable love.'

Thence he learned,
In oft-recurring hours of sober thought,
To look on nature with a humble heart,
Self-questioned where it did not understand,
And with a superstitious eye of love.

All true education, therefore, involves the cultivation of the higher feelings. Our faculties cannot be divided into separate compartments, so that one may be neglected without injury to the rest. Neither in the strictest sense are there some subjects which are sacred and others only secular. A reli-

gious truth is an ordinary truth seen under its deeper aspect. The perception results from the activity of all our faculties, the mind informing the eye, and the soul illuminating the mind. The teacher who does not aim at promoting in the children spiritual intelligence fails from the standpoint of education. Is it too much to hope that the time is approaching when the cultivation of the soul will be regarded as part of our ordinary education?

And how is the soul to be cultivated? It is developed by right feelings, as the body is strengthened by bread. As impure air causes the mind to become drowsy and the eyelids to droop, so in an atmosphere of selfishness and ill-will the soul is stupefied and its vision dulled. Accordingly we find that all the greatest teachers of religion, the purest seekers after God, and the most exalted mystics have insisted upon love as the supreme condition of the soul's activity: 'That your love may abound in knowledge' is the prayer of the apostle. Love is the entrance to all enlightenment and attainment. It is the only means, wrote Tennyson, through which we can escape

from the region of shadows into that of realities. If a bit of glass rightly used will bring into view hidden worlds, and reveal the secrets of the stars, what unimagined depths of knowledge may be opened to the soul through the illuminating power of love!

But love is more than sympathy and attachment; it includes veneration and devotion. Where reverence is wanting, love soon becomes dead. The spirit can only grow by looking up to something that is higher. Its powers are unfolded through veneration. We need therefore to cultivate within ourselves an attitude of lowliness and worship. It is not simply by criticism and judgement that we attain to higher knowledge, but by opening the heart to divine love, and to all that is best in men and things. The path of progress is pointed out in a later chapter of this epistle. 'Whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely . . . think on these things.' We are to ponder and consider all that is noble and good, and fill our consciousness with that which is lovable.

Another condition of knowledge is sincerity, 'That ye may be sincere'; and this is a quality of love. It is love that creates sincerity. The parent of all dishonesty in thought or deed is selfishness. Cowardice and lower interests warp the mind and blind us to reality. We choose rather to live with a comfortable falsehood than with an uncomfortable truth. And nature grants the desire, but punishes our dishonesty with blindness. The loss of perception is the penalty for tampering with the light. We begin by not wishing to see the truth, and end by being incapable of seeing it. It was this fact which led to Plato's startling principle that the involuntary falsehood was worse than the voluntary one. There is hope for the man who knows that he does wrong, but when our faculties cease to inform us there is no recovery.

Training in physical science does much to encourage strictness of thought, and an overmastering pursuit of reality. A desire to see things as they are is the demand that nature makes upon all who would learn her secrets.

As Mr. Huxley says : ‘ Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing.’¹

How much more does this apply to those subjects which are bound up with human interests and passion ! Self-love and self-conceit masquerade under all kinds of disguises. Egoism passes for self-respect, obstinate attachment to our own opinions is called zeal for the truth, and bigotry and intolerance devotion to religion. Prejudice and passion distort truth as the fog changes the appearance of the sun. The clear white light shines in the pure atmosphere ; and reality is only visible to those who have no lie in their heart, who not only desire the truth, but are themselves the truth.

And with love and sincerity is connected

¹ *Life and Letters*, vol. i. p. 219.

progress. These three are one, for they are the outcome of life lived at its best. Love creates sincerity, and sincerity is inseparable from a desire to know. It turns its face towards truth from whatever quarter it may come. It is always growing towards the light.

For words are not fixed and definite things. They are the symbols of ideas and emotions that are continually changing and enlarging with man's growing experience. The words of our childhood must be filled with a wider and deeper meaning to correspond with our expanding life. Each generation passes on to its successor the same hallowed and familiar symbols, but they are interpreted in the light of fuller knowledge and experience. How vastly different for the present generation is the significance of such words as 'God' and 'man,' 'heaven' and 'earth,' 'law' and 'life.' If it had been possible for God to commit a final and complete revelation to the pages of a book; if the Bible were held to be what is claimed for the Koran, faultless in every syllable, a perfect transcript of a heavenly

original, we should still be no better off. If the form has not changed we have changed in our relation to it.

For this reason there can be no such thing as a finished revelation. In the nature of the case revelation must be progressive. It is the demand of life. Truth is not, like geological specimens, to be kept in a museum. It is bread given to be assimilated, and in the strength of which we go on to fresh conquests of knowledge. It is the vital principle of growth ; our nature unfolding itself to ever wider relations. 'As long as men are able to gain further insight into themselves, or into the world, the age of revelation is not closed.'¹

It was a fatal mistake when the Church conceived of God's creative and revealing activity as existing only in the past ; as if God had completed the world, and committed His will to former ages, and then withdrawn into distance and silence. The world is not yet completed : it is only in process of being made. 'My Father,' said Jesus, 'worketh even until now, and I work.'² God is identified with all the

¹ Westcott, *Lessons from Work*. ² John v. 17.

laws and forces of the universe, and with the life of man ; and every fresh discovery in nature, and all human history, is a continuous revelation of His will. We do not, therefore, reverence God unless we are attentive to what He is saying to us in these days, and try to understand the new facts with which we have to deal. It was to this end that the living Spirit was promised to guide us into all the truth, and to declare unto us the things that are to come.¹ It is the spirit of truth, the spirit of inward reality, which enables us to understand the realities that are around us.

The cultivation of our intelligence should be regarded as part of our daily religious exercise. Why should the greatest of all subjects, and the one which touches human life on every side, be associated with defective knowledge and narrowness of view ? How meagre our nature becomes when reading and thought are neglected ! Spiritual fervour that is not informed by knowledge easily degenerates into weakness and eccentricity.

¹ John xvi. 13.

The teacher must go hand in hand with the evangelist.

History shows that religious movements are short-lived that depend only upon enthusiasm. The strength and stability of the Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century was due to the fact that it was accompanied by an intellectual revival. Its main promoter, John Wesley, was a distinguished Oxford scholar, who did his utmost to encourage a love of reading amongst his people. Towards the end of his life he expressed his deliberate judgement that the work which he had done 'would die out in a single generation, if the Methodists were not a reading people.'¹

But, it is said, seeing that the world was converted by twelve ignorant fishermen, knowledge cannot be important in the life of a Christian. This is a misstatement of fact. The world was not converted by twelve ignorant fishermen. Even if we assume that the evangelists, including the writer of the

¹ 'New Light on the Character of Wesley,' *London Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1910.

fourth Gospel, were 'ignorant men,' it must be remembered that until Christianity was committed to St. Paul it was confined to the narrow bounds of Palestine. Humanly speaking, the Christian religion owed its world-wide diffusion to one who was born in a famous university town, who was deeply read in the wisdom of the Jewish schools and versed in Stoic philosophy. And if culture and thought were necessary then, they are many times more important to-day. We have to reckon in the present age with the spread of learning and criticism, and the growth of vast and complicated social problems. Unless these problems are approached with intelligence, our zeal may do more harm than good.

The influence of the Christian Church would be immeasurably increased if only all who profess and call themselves Christians would make it a solemn duty to cultivate their intelligence by thought and reading, and let their love abound in knowledge. 'A thinking man,' said Carlyle, 'is the worst enemy the Prince of Darkness can have.'

III

PROVIDENCE

‘Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel ; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest.’—i. 12-13.

III

PROVIDENCE

ALL things had turned out for the best. Yet to the outward eye it appeared as if the apostle had been the victim of every kind of misfortune. It was now several years since he went to Jerusalem with his heart full of love to his brethren, but his zeal only provoked their fury, and led to his long imprisonment in Caesarea. Then followed his journey to Italy, through storms and shipwreck, from which he barely escaped with his life. Arrived at Rome he finds himself a lonely prisoner, in hourly expectation of death beneath the axe of the executioner.

Yet he writes joyfully to his friends at Philippi that everything had worked for good, and that the inner purpose of his life had been fulfilled.

That purpose was to preach the gospel in

the chief city of the world. He had written an epistle to the brethren at Rome in anticipation of his visit, and in this he informed them that he longed to impart unto them some spiritual gift, and prayed that God would open his way to them. His prayer had been answered; yet how strangely! Everything seemed to have happened naturally. No miracle proclaimed him to be subject to any exceptional treatment. He is not shielded from trials and sufferings. The waves and storms do not spare him. The apostle felt certain that God was guiding him, yet he acted and planned as if the result depended upon himself. He utilized all circumstances so that they became his servants. The violence of his enemies, instead of defeating his purpose, helped to accomplish it. The chain that bound him to the soldier gave him the opportunity that he prayed for. If he could not preach to listening crowds in the Forum, he might influence the individual soldiers who relieved guard over him. Not by his teaching only, but still more by his patient dignity in suffering and his constant joy in God, Christ

became manifest, first to the imperial soldiers, and, through them, 'to all the rest.'

And his long imprisonment enlarged his sphere of usefulness in other ways. Confinement to his own hired lodgings afforded him time to think and write and teach, opportunities which were rare during his years of travel. It is sometimes good for a busy worker to be withdrawn from the turmoil and activities of the world, and to become for a season the 'prisoner of the Lord.' At such a time we gain a deeper spiritual life through more intimate communion with God and our own souls. It is to the apostle's long imprisonment that we owe the most profound and beautiful of his epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians.

The experience of St. Paul is an instructive example of the working of Providence, and it throws light upon the subject in its wider aspects.

Though expressed in various ways, belief in Providence is practically universal. It is recognized by modern science in the statement that there is reason and order in the universe, and

by the sceptical poet who speaks of 'a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness.' Eastern religions teach it in the doctrine of Karma ; while to the loftiest minds of Greece it appeared as an unseen and guiding power that assigned rewards and punishments on principles of unerring justice. The Hebrew prophets proclaimed it as 'the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth' ; while to Jesus it was the will of the Heavenly Father, who noted the fall of a sparrow, and caused His sun to shine upon the evil and the good.

At times the Christian view receives a shock in some appalling calamity, such as the Messina earthquake, which involved the loss of nearly 100,000 lives. When Lisbon was overwhelmed in the eighteenth century, Voltaire pointed to the catastrophe as justifying his denial of God. But does not the dismay we feel chiefly arise from an exaggerated sense of the importance of the physical life ? The fall of the tower of Siloam upon good and bad alike did not perplex the faith of Jesus. In his view the tragedy of human existence was to be read not

in what befell the body, but in what happened to the soul. If the present life is a single stage in man's endless progress, it cannot be a matter of supreme importance how he passes hence, whether by sudden catastrophe, or after weeks or months of suffering.

It is safe to say that distrust of Providence does not come to those who are working in harmony with it. Seers and saints do not doubt it. St. Paul never questioned it. All who try to order their life righteously become aware of a certain purpose in things. They discover that events are not moving blindly, but are steadily progressing towards some definite end. Perhaps for a time the meaning of things is hidden from their view: circumstances have seemed against them, storms and adverse currents have driven their little barque far out of its course; but none the less they know that the direction of their progress is right, and that the goal is drawing nearer.

Has modern knowledge thrown any fresh light upon our thoughts of Providence?

The greatest service it has rendered is in teaching us that providential aid is not simply

occasional, but is present always, and in everything. The old theory of the universe placed God outside of things. The world was looked upon as a machine which the Maker had set going, and then withdrawn Himself, only appearing at intervals to put it right where it had gone wrong. The habit has grown up of recognizing the divine action only in what is abnormal and exceptional. A ship founders, and it is the act of God; a fleet crosses the ocean in safety, and it is the skill of man. Thousands die every day, and it is natural law; now and then an earthquake wrecks a city, and it is the visitation of Providence. Nature is supposed to run by herself, and the finger of God is only visible in that which is outside the established course of things. Accordingly people look eagerly for strange events, for some happenings that cannot be readily explained, that they may be assured that God is in the world.

But year by year science is reducing the number of these 'unexplained events.' It shows us cause and effect reigning in every part of the universe. Even the most uncertain

facts are reduced to system. The winds and weather are traced to their home in the ocean; the return of a comet after a hundred years is calculated to a minute, and the path of meteors is determined almost as precisely as that of the planets. There is no such thing as chance anywhere. The fall of a die on a particular face is as much the result of definite causes as the fall of a stone. Even the workings of the human mind are reduced to order by psychology, and the experiences of the soul are shown to be subject to the law of the Spirit.

It is complained that this view of law and order shuts God out of the world, and leaves Him, as Carlyle said, nothing to do. Is the divine action, then, only to be seen in irregularity and confusion, and not rather in method and order? Is a ruler less supreme, or is he less trusted and loved because he governs by fixed laws instead of by arbitrary and changing decrees? It is just because the laws of nature are constant and undeviating that man is able to study them and control them.

But the universality of law does not exclude

the divine action. A law is not a cause, it simply declares that things happen in a particular way. The fact that a bell rings every day at certain hours does not tell us what caused the bell to ring. When a stone falls to the ground, or the tides follow the moon, we say in a general way it is caused by the law of gravitation. Strictly speaking the cause is in some mysterious force of which science can give no explanation. The clearest idea of cause is derived from our own will-power. Whenever we think or resolve, power flows into our muscles and directs their movement, we know not how. So we are led to conceive of one divine will-power flowing through the whole universe, present in the least thing as in the greatest, energizing every molecule of matter, and guiding and inspiring the spirit of man. To be in harmony with that will-power is to be in the path of Providence; it is to be guided by the indwelling Spirit.

What we need to pray is not so much that God would alter for us the outward order, as that He would bring us into right relation with

it; not that He would change the sequence of events, but rather the spirit in which we meet them. The one condition of help is obedience, that we should seek to know the divine will, and act along with it. Time was when it was believed that petitions and religious rites would stay the plague, and drive pestilence from our shores. Now it is asked more reverently that Providence may be to us a spirit of wisdom and understanding, that we might find out the meanings of things, and bring ourselves into harmony with divine laws.

The more fully these laws are studied and obeyed, the less reason is felt for fear. The ancients believed that the gods were envious of human happiness, and that it was prudent for the prosperous man to avoid attracting their attention. They lived in the world as if they were in an enemy's country, and menaced on every side by agents of evil. But we feel at home with nature, and know that she means good and not evil. For us the pestilence no longer walketh in darkness; steam and electricity have become our friends, and the

estranging ocean a highway of communication. The outward conditions are the same ; we have triumphed by knowledge and obedience.

But Providence operates through higher laws than those which belong to the world of physical things. The physical order of nature is not all ; we are surrounded by a world of thought and mind. As the body is moulded by the spirit, so our earthly life is ruled by energies that flow in upon us from the Unseen. If not a particle in the universe is left uninfluenced, if 'empty space' is penetrated through and through by forces that have voyaged from distant suns, is it not reasonable to believe that will and mind, the greatest of all forces, should exert a power over our life and its condition ?

The spiritual world, as well as the natural, is subject to law. In it, also, things cannot be had simply for the asking. Character and achievement come in response to obedience, they are given to those who fulfil divine laws, by uniting their wishes and efforts with the Supreme Will. For prayer is not a form of words, but an attitude of soul. It is seeking

the things that are above. It does not wish to change the divine purposes, but to make those purposes its own.

And when this union is established, things are not left as they were. Important results are produced which affect our life and environment. A new force comes into play, and the old conditions are transformed. When a magnet is brought near to a heap of iron filings the confused mass becomes arranged into harmonious and beautiful order. And when the Divine Spirit enters our life, all discordant events are resolved into order and purpose. Providential guidance no longer appears only in 'strange events' and miraculous interpositions. It is felt that all things are working together for good, helping us onward and upward.

He who is 'led of the Spirit,' sees the hand of God not only in ease and plenty, but in the hardships that evoke courage, in the disappointments that teach patience, and in the sufferings that bring insight. Those circumstances are recognized as best that call forth the noblest that is in us, and that open to

us the richest opportunities of helpful service and spiritual growth. And this often comes through the non-fulfilment of our hopes and the disappointment of our plans. But the soul is supreme over all happenings, and dominates all events. He who sincerely wishes to be good, becomes good and surrounds himself with an atmosphere of peace; while evil things fly to those whose thoughts are evil. Emerson said, if we would succeed, we must hitch our wagon to a star. Jesus has told us to set our affections on things above. The underlying truth is the same. When the love of God is in a man's heart, all the forces of the universe unite and conspire to bring about the fulfilment of his aims.

Mystery deep and impenetrable still overshadows human existence; but amidst the surrounding darkness the one certain rule for man is to look well to his inner life, to keep the light within him clear and bright, and to follow resolutely its guidance. Let him, like St. Paul, cease to trouble about events, and turn all his thoughts to bringing his will into harmony with the Eternal Will. Let him seek

first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all things will be added unto him. Religion thus realized ceases to be a matter of time and occasion, and becomes a life illuminating all experience, and making business as sacred as worship. (It is said that when Thoreau lay on his death-bed, a Calvinistic friend called to make inquiry regarding his soul. 'Henry,' he said anxiously, 'have you made your peace with God?' 'John,' replied the dying naturalist in a whisper, 'I didn't know that God and I had quarrelled!') He lived in the Spirit.

IV

CATHOLICITY

‘Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife ; and some also of good will : the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel : but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds.

‘What then? only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed ; and therein I rejoyce, yea, and will rejoyce.’—i. 15-18.

IV

CATHOLICITY

(THERE is a false and a true catholicity. The false is that whose prevailing tone is indifference; which views all systems and creeds with equal impartiality, because it is interested in none. This attitude is not to be mistaken for large-mindedness; it is often a symptom of the most soul-destroying narrowness. The true catholicity is distinguished by earnestness; but it is earnestness for the things which matter, for the substance and not the form, for the spirit and not the letter. It is intensely anxious that people should become Christians and be won to righteousness, but it would allow them to become Christians in their own way.

This catholicity the apostle had learned from Christ. By the deepening of his spiritual

life he was led to look through forms and words to the underlying realities. It is Paul, the Christian, who writes: 'He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter.'¹ And in the passage before us the apostle reveals the same insight and noble-mindedness. He rises above all personal feelings, and thankfully acknowledges the good that is being done by rivals. He rejoices that Christ is preached, although the doctrine is defective, and there is much in the methods and motives of the teachers which he cannot approve. 'Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, actuated by sectarian spirit; not sincerely; thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds.'

These are strong words, and it is possible that St. Paul, in the ardour of his zeal, may have done his opponents less than justice. We remember that his own high motives were called in question, both in his labours for Christ, and in the earlier days when he 'compassed sea and land to make one proselyte.'

¹ Rom. ii. 28, 29.

Yet he writes even of the former state that he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly,¹ and that he had served God in a pure conscience.²

Human nature is seldom influenced by only one motive. Higher and lower impulses contend in the same heart, and it is often difficult to strike the balance, and say which has the determining force. It is wise to remember Amiel's advice: 'If you would think well of your fellow men, do not expect too much from them.' Or, better still, to lay to heart the words of the great apostle himself: 'Love taketh not account of evil.' It is only by believing the best concerning others that we can appreciate them at their true worth. How often do members of different Churches stand aloof from one another in coldness and distrust! Yet when brought together by some common enthusiasm for public charity, or social reform, they are surprised to discover in one another so much that is worthy of respect and regard.

There is a fable of a man walking in a fog,

¹ 1 Tim. i. 13.

² 2 Tim. i. 3.

who saw in the distance an object which he took to be a monster. As it approached he was relieved to find that it was a human being, and a moment later was delighted to recognize his brother. This is a parable of the Churches. Their estrangements arise mainly from ignorance and misunderstanding. A better knowledge of one another would dispel misconceptions and distrust. Friendliness and sympathy, a respect for those who differ from us, an earnest effort to see things from the standpoint of others, the love of truth more than the love of our own Church or party, will create an atmosphere conducive to harmony of thought and feeling.

St. Paul, in his exhortation to peace and unity, went to the root of the matter when he urged upon the Philippian church the necessity of humility and unselfishness. Humility will remind us of the limits of our faculties, and check an over-confident and dogmatic statement of transcendent truths. 'One of the surprises,' said Dean Church, 'that we shall meet after death, will be the recollection that when we were here we thought the ways of

Almighty God so easy to argue about.' And love, which is the greater uniter, will not rest in estrangement, but will strive to be at one with all good and earnest souls.

If no basis of agreement could be found, it would imply a strong condemnation of our religious ideas, and would go far towards justifying the popular neglect of the subject. It would seem to show that the fundamental truths of religion had not their source in our common human nature, but were artificially produced ; that they did not spring up within the soul and bear witness to themselves, but were imposed upon us by the devices of men. Or it might be argued, Where is the practical value of a subject which is so debatable ? How is an ordinary mortal to find his way amidst a multitude of conflicting beliefs ? Must the great question of his soul's relation to its Maker be deferred until the Churches have settled their differences, and it is determined what dogmas are to be retained, and which school of criticism is going to hold the field ?

Again ; division is antagonistic to the spirit

and intelligence of our age. Unity is the keynote of modern thought. Poetry, philosophy, and science are proclaiming it aloud. They are asking us to turn our thoughts from multitudinous differences to the underlying unity of things in nature ; to discern, amidst boundless variety, one law and one mind.

There is a deepening consciousness of the brotherhood of man, a desire to get nearer to one another. Barriers of caste and prejudice are beginning to give way. A fuller knowledge of Eastern religions is bringing to light much that is held in common with ourselves. In all directions human nature is striving after a larger union of thought and sympathy. If the Church does not respond, but is more intent on emphasizing differences than in discovering unity, she will cut herself off from the aspirations of her age.

Further ; the widening of our life is bringing with it larger views of the nature of religion. It is more generally recognized that religion is not simply concerned with one or two faculties, but with the development of our whole personality—body, mind, and soul. Its

aim is not to reduce us to a uniform type, and provide us with a safe passport to another world ; but to bring each one to his best in this world, in harmony with the laws of his own nature. If, then, religion does not suppress but develops our individuality, is it not desirable that the spiritual life should be allowed to express itself through those forms and ideas which are found to be most helpful ?

Where there is earnestness and intelligence, variety will often declare itself in the bosom of the same family. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, do not always think alike upon many of the important things of life. But if love, the great unifier, remains, variety of thought only adds a fresh charm and interest to the home. Is not this to be preferred to the uniformity which may result from intellectual stagnation, or be imposed by authority ?

When account is taken of the wide differences which exist amongst people in their mind, and temperament, and circumstances, does it not seem an advantage that there should be different Churches to minister to

such varied and complex needs? It has been pointed out that the elasticity and mobility of Christianity have been preserved by the fact that the apostles never realized that they were building up a Church which was to last through the ages. They laid down no permanent and fixed rules for Church organization and government in the future. 'They never wrote or legislated except so far as existing needs demanded. Their writings were occasional, suggested by some pressing difficulty. . . . It may seem a paradox, but yet it is profoundly true, that the Church is adapted to the needs of every age, just because the original preachers of Christianity never attempted to adapt it to the needs of any period but their own.'¹

This does not mean that every system is equally good, but that each has a value of its own, and that the superiority of one over another is to be judged by its practical effect in raising people to the noblest type of life.

¹ Sanday and Headlam, *Epistle to the Romans*. Note on the Parousia, p. 380.

We are all debtors to one another. If the Nonconformist worship is marked by heartiness and spontaneity, the Anglican service is distinguished by beauty, dignity, and reverence. If in some Churches there is an exaggerated emphasis on faith and feeling, the balance is restored by others who vindicate the claims of thought and inquiry. The sympathies that unite us are profound and fundamental, and our estrangements arise mainly from what John Wesley called 'the vehement prejudice of my education.'

Consider how much we hold in common.

1. We are at one in the facts and experiences of the spiritual life. In hope and aspiration, and in the joy of a life surrendered to the divine will, there is no distinction. In praise and prayer there is a fellowship of the spirit which rises above all controversy. We worship with men of all creeds, and, like Lamartine, can say, 'I see a friend in every prayerful soul.' In our churches we sing the hymns of Quakers and Unitarians, of Catholics, and Anglicans and Evangelicals. Writers of divergent schools speak through the thoughtful

preacher and suggest many of his most inspiring utterances. The uplifting sense of a common spiritual life resolves into deepest harmony our several discords.

2. We are one in fundamental religious beliefs. We believe in 'One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.' We hold in common that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. We pray together in the words of Jesus. We believe in the immortality of the soul and the promise of an ennobled humanity. We confess that all men will be judged according to the deeds done in the body. How trivial are our differences in view of these transcendent and acknowledged truths! If they were but realized with any vividness and intensity, they would completely transform our life. It is not the length of a creed that counts, but the response which the soul makes to it. A few simple truths perceived with insight and feeling are more vitalizing than a whole system of belief that is only vaguely held. Insistence upon agreement in secondary questions tends to defeat the end of religion by dissipating in

discussion the energy that should be concentrated on spiritual growth.

3. We are one in Christian service. No Church can claim a superiority in zeal. All alike are working among the poor and the outcast, and in the spirit of their Master are seeking to bring comfort and healing to the sin-stricken and sorrowful. And in presence of the enormous misery and degradation and materialism of our age, which is threatening the existence of all the Churches, is it not time that we talked less about our differences and stood shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy? Cannot the Churches pull together in love for the betterment of mankind? It is our antagonisms that are crippling our usefulness, and furnishing to an infidel press its most destructive weapons. Some of the old proofs of Christianity are no longer available. 'The proof of Christianity,' said Bishop Westcott, 'which is prepared by God, as I believe, for our times, is a Christian society filled with one spirit in two forms—righteousness and love.'

The hope for unity lies not so much in out-

ward conformity or identity of thought as in a more profound Christian experience. We need to spiritualize our formularies, and infuse into them a deeper life and feeling. The hard legal mind, which has shaped so much of our theology, must give place to a more mystical interpretation. The lawyer is seldom the peacemaker. In religion as well as in science there is a serious danger of materialism. In the concentration of thought on words and customs, the theologian may become like the man in Bunyan, so intent on straws as to miss the crown that is above his head.

A common and sufficient basis of agreement is afforded by the Christ-life in us, proved through loving service and the good that we do to our fellow men. 'To all ages of the Church—to our own especially,' wrote Bishop Lightfoot, 'this epistle reads a great lesson. While we are expending our strength on theological definitions or ecclesiastical rules, it recalls us from these distractions to the very heart and centre of the gospel—the life of Christ and the life in Christ.'

The illustrious founder of Pennsylvania

spoke the truth when he said that ‘ the humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion ; and when death has taken off the mask, they will know one another, though the diverse liveries they wear here make them strangers.’

V

THE LIFE INDEED

‘For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.’—i. 21.

V

THE LIFE INDEED

WE are often told to think about our mortality, to remember our frail and vanishing condition. But a far greater need is to be reminded of our immortal life, to affirm the permanent in our nature rather than the passing. It is not by fixing the mind upon the grave and death that we triumph over the world, but by rising into the consciousness of a deathless life. Strength and inspiration come to us from those who help us to believe in the immortal state, who speak of it not doubtfully, but with the certainty of knowledge. We feel this, for example, when the poet Browning says, 'Never say of me that I am dead. You know as well as I that death is life.' And when Tolstoi writes on his

eightieth birthday, 'It is another happiness that I await—death. I feel I know with certainty, that in dying I shall be happy, that I shall enter a world more real.' And still more is it felt in the inspired utterance of St. Paul, 'To depart and be with Christ is far better.' Such experiences help us to realize our own immortal nature.

How did this certainty come to the apostle? He tells us that it was realized through the knowledge and friendship of Jesus Christ.

A modern writer, in his appreciation of the inner spirit of Buddhism, speaks of the deep craving in our nature for fellowship. 'The root,' he says, 'of all our difficulty, of our every pain, is that we are alone. We are so weak, so small, so finite, that the world oppresses us. . . . What can our people, no matter how near, how true, help us in many losses? Our nearest pass from us, we drift when we are old from out the nation's tide. We have enemies within ourselves against which we need an inner help. At last we die, and pass from all that we have known. They cannot help us, whatever they do. We need a

nearer, closer friend, closer than wife or husband, a friend who goes on for ever, who is ourselves.'¹

This is a true statement of the need of the human heart for perfect fellowship. But how can the friend who is to care for us and comfort us be said to be ourselves? Does not friendship imply one who is other than ourselves, with whom we can hold communion, and who will help and cheer us in our darkest hours? To speak of God as a person is not to ascribe to Him the limitations that belong to us. The essence of personality does not consist in limitation, but in the consciousness of self-hood and self-determining power. This is the highest thing we know or can conceive, and we cannot think of God as less.

The great blessing that the Christian religion bestows upon us is that it reveals to us a being whom we can love, and who will be a companion and friend to the lonely heart of man. Such a person became known to St. Paul in Jesus Christ. His conversion was not simply a change of creed, the giving up of one

¹ Fielding Hall, *The Inner Light*.

system of thought for another. It was the meeting with a heavenly Friend and Saviour.

It has been observed by Professor James¹ that 'underlying all the discrepancies of the creeds, there is a common truth to which every religion bears its testimony. Put in its simplest terms it is: (1) a sense that there is something wrong about us, and (2) that we are saved from our wrongness by making proper connexion with the Higher Power.' Few men have realized the wrongness of their nature so intensely as St. Paul, or the futility of their own unaided efforts to put things right. He attributes his success entirely to his coming into connexion with the Higher Power. Others might seek union with the Higher Power by means of tradition or knowledge, through philosophy or self-discipline; to him it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Henceforth all his spiritual experiences were expressed in terms of his relation to Jesus. The glory of God was seen in the face of Jesus Christ. The inner light was Christ in him. The moral ideal was likeness to Jesus,

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 508.

peace was the uniting of his will with Christ's will. Worship was the outpouring of his soul to Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. To live was to commune with Jesus and serve Him. And, as in earthly friendships where hearts are drawn together by a deep spiritual sympathy there arises such a unity of thought and feeling that they act and think together as if they were one person, and not two, so St. Paul felt that his life was hidden with Christ in God. 'Christ in me, and I in Christ' was the formula of his theology.

But while realizing this intimate and inseparable union with Jesus, he did not lose the balance of truth. He knew that he was living his own life, though it was a life penetrated and illumined by the divine Spirit. It was in living to Jesus that he became conscious of his true self. Every faculty was stimulated to its highest activity.

When the apostle writes : 'To me to live is Christ,' he is expressing a double truth. He is telling us that he was living his own completed life, and that Christ had enabled him to do so. For to be a Christian is not to adopt a mode of

thought and feeling that is foreign to us. It is to be true to our own nature, to our deeper self. The surface self of our immediate consciousness is not our real nature. Thus St. Peter speaks of 'The hidden man of the heart,' and St. Paul refers to his bodily sufferings as unimportant, because 'Though our outward man is decaying, our inward man is renewed day by day.' It is only when we die to the false self that we live our true life.

Living to Christ has little necessary relation to any particular scheme of thought. It is the solemn dedication of our will to follow Him. It is to actualize in ourselves the spirit of Jesus. It is to possess His perfect trust in God, and to live for the things for which He lived. And when this is our strenuous purpose, are we not naturally led to look to Jesus as our guide and Saviour, and to cling to Him with deepening trust and love? It is a simple fact of experience that those who are trying most earnestly to live the Christ-life find their chief inspiration in communion with the Saviour, and in the consciousness of His sympathy and approval.

Now it was in living this life that St. Paul was raised above the fear of death. The result of his imprisonment was still doubtful. It might end in his continued life in the flesh, or in his immediate departure and being with Jesus. He weighs the reasons for life and death. When he thought of those who needed his sympathy and counsel, he preferred for their sake to remain a little longer upon the earth. But his own desire and choice would have been in favour of death.

Other great and good men have also met death with calmness. Socrates drank the hemlock while talking quietly to his friends, and said, 'Be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or death.' And the last watchword given by the devout Roman Emperor Antoninus was 'Æquanimitas!' But the experience of the apostle rose above courage and tranquillity; he struck a note of deeper confidence and joy. Heaven was a state with which he was already familiar. It was the continuance and fulfilment of the life that he was now living. He lived for Christ

here, to depart meant closer fellowship, more complete union. After the momentary shock which is called death, he looked forward to resuming under more perfect conditions the life he had been living upon earth.

That which makes the prospect of death so terrible for most men is the feeling of loneliness and uncertainty. It is the tearing them away from what is dear and familiar, and launching them upon an untried and unknown existence. How little do 'scientific reasons' avail when the shadow threatens us or falls upon our homes! Death and the grave are stern facts of experience, and can only be overcome by some higher experience. Perhaps it was for this reason that Jesus said so little about proofs of a future life. He wished it to become a fact in consciousness. In living to God, we realize eternal life while here. This was the great gift which Jesus promised to bestow. It was not something future and distant, but a state to be lived now upon the earth.

In the New Testament immortality is never treated as the mere survival of our existence; it is always spoken of as a quality

of life that resides in us now. The gift of 'eternal life' does not refer to the mere prolongation of our existence, but to a life that is timeless. It is called 'eternal' because it is the same in all ages, and in all places. Holiness, truth, and love, are the same in God and man, in heaven and earth. It is the perfected life of the soul.

Jesus gives us this life by enabling us to live it. Through spiritual union with Him, we are made 'partakers of the divine nature.' He who lives this life does not need to prepare for eternity; he is as much in eternity as he ever will be. He is 'under the power of an endless life.' This was the secret of St. Paul's joyful confidence. He felt sure of heaven because he was in it already. To have faith in the immortal life, we must live it. If we live for the flesh, we can believe in nothing else; if we live for the spirit, we realize our oneness with God. Death and illusion pertain to the body, and when we live for the body our hopes perish with it. But he who lives for Christ rises into the immortal part of his nature, and dwells in the spirit.

There is no other way to certainty. It is a law of our nature that we believe only in that for which we live. Even the world around us, with its noise and movement, appears a vain show if we live apart from its activities and interests. Its intense reality is felt only by those who are contending with its forces, and bending their energies to the achievement of some noble purpose. Such supreme things as duty and love are visionary until they form part and parcel of our life. It is only as we strive to fulfil them and make sacrifices for them that they become powerful and all-compelling. And the spiritual world is real only to those who are consciously living in it, who are utilizing its forces and obeying its laws.

It was not merely the longing for rest that led St. Paul to declare that the next life would be better than this. He believed that death was only another name for progress, and that through death the soul would advance to a state of deeper love and clearer knowledge. It must be better to depart, because we carry with us into that other world all the good

that we have received or done here, all acquired knowledge and experience, all disciplined faculties and enriched affections. And while nothing will be lost, the soul will continue its progress in a state more favourable to knowledge and development. After the painful and weary struggles of earth, death will be as a refreshing sleep to invigorate and prepare our powers for their activity in a higher existence.

And it will bring us into more complete union with those whom we have loved on earth. For though the longing of St. Paul was to be with his Saviour, yet his words carry us beyond their immediate application to the reunion of all loving souls in heaven. This hope has its source in the deep instinct which compels us to think of love as undying. The thought of final separation would destroy not only religious faith, but wither all human affection.

The sound of that forgetful shore
Would change its sweetness more and more,
Half-dead to know that it would die.¹

¹ Tennyson, *In Memoriam*.

It is not the promise of future glory that will give us peace in the hour of death, but the present possession of trust and love. It is Christ in us the hope of glory. The soul that is knit to Jesus knows that nothing can separate it from the love of God. And when earthly friendships are pure and holy, when hearts are made one in Christ, the same hope that bids us look forward to being with Jesus promises to us the restoration of all ties that have been broken by death.

VI

A CITIZEN OF TWO WORLDS

‘Only behave as citizens worthily of the gospel of Christ : that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel ; and in nothing affrighted by the adversaries.’—i. 27, 28.

VI

A CITIZEN OF TWO WORLDS

PHILIPPI was an outpost of the Roman Empire. It was a single city, which, with the adjoining land, had been given to disbanded veterans as a reward for service, and with a view to guarding the frontier. By the settlement of such colonies Rome extended her dominions. To possess citizenship was a coveted distinction. It not only gave dignity and honour, but also conferred many privileges. St. Paul took his stand upon it in this very city. 'Often and in many lands,' wrote Cicero, 'had the mere words—I am a Roman citizen—brought help and security among foreigners.'

From the connexion of Philippi with the mother city the apostle rose to the vision of one great spiritual commonwealth in heaven

and on earth. 'Our citizenship is in heaven.'¹ 'Ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and the household of God.'² 'We are part of the family in heaven and on earth.'³ And as it was the duty of the Roman citizen to be loyal to the parent commonwealth, to reproduce its character and features in his own life, to be ready to sacrifice himself on its behalf, so the Christian is called upon to be faithful to the heavenly kingdom, to live its life, and strive to advance its welfare. The passage brings before us two great truths.

I. This world is part of God's empire.

II. His subjects are to strive to make His will done upon earth as it is done in heaven.

I. There is a great and expansive power in the sense of belonging to a vast imperial system. It was this consciousness that gave dignity and strength to the ancient Roman living amidst an alien population in a remote corner of the earth. It is the love of the mother country that kindles courage and generous enthusiasm in the hearts of our distant colon-

¹ Phil. iii. 20.

² Eph. ii. 19.

³ Eph. iii. 20.

ists. It raises us out of our narrowness and egotism to feel that we are a part of a mighty empire, greater than any that the world has yet seen. But there is a still nobler view of empire, and a truer patriotism. It is that which, while loving its own country best, realizes the essential oneness of mankind ; which strives to create the sense of common citizenship amongst all nations, and calls no man foreigner, because all are the children of God. This was the new and distinctive feature in the teaching of Jesus. The Roman citizen was a member of a privileged caste. To the Jew, God was the God of Israel, and His favours were bestowed only upon the chosen race. He blesses men out of Zion. But in the gospel all are by nature sons of God, and members of the kingdom. All must be brought to realize this relationship through trust and love.

And we may rise to a yet grander and more exalted conception of dominion. It is to feel that there is no barrier between this world and the next, that visible and invisible are one, that we are not exiles here, but part of the whole family in earth and heaven. Are we not all

subject to the one righteous and loving Ruler ? Angels do God's will in heaven, the saints do it upon the earth. Living or dead, all live unto Him. As physical laws are unchanging through all space, so moral laws are the same for all worlds. They are discovered but not made. Whatever is noble and beautiful in the world, all that is just and true in human society, every righteous enactment, is from heaven.

This truth has been recognized and proclaimed by every great seer and prophet. The Hebrew taught that all things were to be done 'according to the pattern in the Mount.' Greek philosophy as expressed in Plato makes all mortal things the symbols of immortal ideas ; to St. Paul the visible creation was the manifestation of the invisible order, and St. John saw the New Jerusalem descend out of heaven.

Our visions and ideals come to us from the other world. They witness to the fact that we are something more than citizens of an earthly State. To lose these ideals, to believe that there is nothing grand to live for, is the

greatest of all sorrows. It is only as human relationships and institutions are permeated by spiritual ideas, that they can be great and noble and enduring. If the British Empire existed only for barter and gain and selfish aggrandisement, it would be shorn of its strength and glory. The flag is loved and honoured because it is believed to stand for truth and freedom, for justice and mercy. And what is this but seeing the eternal in the temporal, confessing that our citizenship is in heaven, and that we are here to reproduce its life upon the earth?

The tendency to separate material well-being from spiritual ideals is one of the disquieting features of our time. Many who claim Jesus as a social reformer are silent about the source of His power. They remind us that He lived in the world, carried upon His heart the burdens and sorrows of the people, went about doing good, teaching and healing. But they say nothing concerning His secret life in God, the whole nights spent in prayer, the consciousness of the divine purpose in His life. Take away all the passages

in the life of Jesus that refer directly or indirectly to communion with God, and how much of the gospel is left?

Both history and experience show that he who feels himself to be the citizen of another world, labours most for the improvement of this. Materialism paralyses moral effort by lowering our aims and contracting our views. How can we think worthily of human nature, or exalt our thoughts to anything great and noble, if it is believed that the grave ends all? It was because they did not regard man as a spiritual being that Aristotle and the other Greeks of his time failed to appreciate the worth and dignity of human personality. 'Not until man was rescued out of the kingdom of nature and taken up into the commonwealth of God, and into personal relations with the divine Being, could he be more than the member of a social organism, or an instrument for achieving the ends of the State.'¹

All parts of the spiritual empire are in immediate communication. A citizen of Rome

¹ Butcher, *Aspects of the Greek Genius*, p. 79.

might be far away from the seat of power, and a distant colony might be overwhelmed before assistance could reach it. But in the world of spirit there is no remoteness. Estranging barriers belong only to our physical environment. We are not, as to our minds, separated in space from any other spiritual beings, wherever they may be. Help is always near. Let there be a silent prayer or an earnest resolve, and divine succour is at hand.

And not only does aid come to us from the Father of spirits, but His invisible hosts, the great company of the departed, are also our fellow helpers. Is it conceivable that those who have gone home to the mother city should have lost all interest in the struggles of their brethren and the welfare of the kingdom? They strove and suffered for it here; has their entrance into the larger life quenched their zeal for God and their love for man? Is it not more reasonable to think of them as with us, cheering and strengthening their comrades in the fight? If this planet lies open to all kinds of influences coming from afar; if not a daisy can grow

unless it is touched by the light and warmth of another world ; would it not be strange if our lives were never influenced by thoughts and volitions flashed upon us from worlds unquickened by the sun ? Science is accumulating facts which help to confirm our belief in the immediate and sympathetic communication between minds in all parts of the world. It is enabling us to realize the all-embracing unity of the spiritual commonwealth, and our nearness to the mother city.

II. If the divine kingdom is to be established upon the earth it must be by the combined efforts of God's people.

Every Roman citizen was a soldier. When war broke out a levy was made, and those going forth to fight for their country were required to take the oath of loyalty. They pledged themselves to spend and be spent for their country. The oath was called the *sacramentum*. It is the word from which our 'sacrament' is derived. It is well to remember the inner meaning of the most sacred rite in our Christian faith. When we commemorate the Saviour's death we not only

commune with our Lord, but take the oath which commits us to service and suffering.

Let us dismiss from our minds the fatal and prevalent belief that because this is God's world He may be left to take care of it without our trouble or exertion. The great teaching of modern knowledge is that while we can do nothing without God, God will do nothing without man. Let our fields and gardens be left to evolution, and they become a wilderness. Resign your children to nature, and they grow up savages. Let the welfare of the country be handed over to the working of impersonal forces, let reformers and statesmen relax their efforts, and Christian people withdraw from responsibility, and the freedom and faith won by centuries of struggle and sacrifice would slip from our grasp.

But what can the individual do to make the world better? His efforts appear puny and futile in the presence of overwhelming sin and misery. We forget that our power for usefulness is incalculably increased in union with others. We are to strive together 'in one spirit and one mind.'

The spirit of union and co-operation is one of the most notable features of the present age. The forces of association are making themselves felt in every department of human activity. They are seen in trade, in pleasure, in philanthropy, in social reform, in public life, in things evil and good, selfish and benevolent. It is a remarkable fact that along with this movement towards collective activity there should be shown less disposition to union in public worship. Many who are sincerely wishful to benefit their fellow men strangely hold aloof from the Church. Yet most of the good work done in the world receives its inspiration from religious fellowship. The Church exists to promote our faith in God and sustain the ideals by which we ought to live. It rests upon the principle that spiritual force is increased in combination. To unite ourselves with some Church, to be loyal to its institutions, and work harmoniously with its members, is one chief means by which God's kingdom is to be advanced upon the earth. It is not the least important part of our education and discipline to learn to work along

with others, to train ourselves to recognize the worth of those who are opposed to us, and to appreciate other points of view.

And wherever there is a living Church there is fellowship in work, union in every kind of helpful service. Napoleon said that an army that remained within its entrenchments was beaten. A Church that does not make aggressive warfare upon evil stands convicted of failure—and something worse than failure. It is guilty of complicity with the evil that it does not try to prevent. Our lives are bound up with the lives of countless thousands whom we have never seen. The misery and oppression that rest upon the people is the result of the complex social system of which we all form a part. Each of us is directly or indirectly contributing something to the sufferings of others. We incur a deep reproach and condemnation if, while sharing the benefits of civilized life, we do not try to alleviate the waste and distress that are brought in its train.

Most of the evils in the world are capable of being remedied, and the power to do so has been largely placed in the hands of Christian

people. The Church of Christ has indeed been too long content 'to act the part of the ambulance,' and pick up the wounded as they fell. God is calling upon it to-day to close its ranks and advance against the evils that are destroying society. In modern times, when three-quarters of the population of the country are massed in cities, it becomes far more urgent for Christian people to study the problems of the town in which they live, and to join hands with those who are trying to purify its life.

The day is happily gone by when active interest in public affairs is considered to be merely secular. The charge of irreligion lies against those who are content to live only for their own private ends. Tamely to submit to poverty and squalor, drunkenness and vice in our midst as if they were inevitable is a confession that the gospel has failed. These things are inevitable only so long as Christian people are content to have them so. 'To play the citizen worthily of the gospel of Christ' is to ally ourselves with the forces of righteousness.

Many of our cities afford an example of the good work that may be done by members of Churches joining together for social welfare, irrespective of party or creed. By helping to form public opinion, and bringing to light evils and abuses, and strengthening the hands of those who are grappling with wrong, they have made right living more possible for thousands. No true Christian will ever give his vote thoughtlessly. Every time he marks his ballot-paper he will reflect that he is helping to make the character of the town in which he lives, or to decide how a quarter of the human race is to be governed.

The apostle speaks of the necessity of courage. The enemy of courage is discouragement. We fail only when we lose confidence in our cause. To know that we are in the right is to be afraid of nothing. John Howard, while exploring the fever-infected dungeons of Europe, wrote in his diary : 'Believing myself to be in the way of my duty, I felt no fear.' It is faith in God and in the righteousness of our cause that will enable us to bear up and endure, and to be indifferent to praise and

blame. We are weak and depressed because we forget God. We see the forces that are against us, but not those that are on our side. We lose sight of our connexion with the larger life, and of the heavenly powers that are striving with us. The good citizen of an earthly State, as long as he is within his duty, is as unconquerable as the State itself; and the citizen of heaven who is doing his Master's will upon the earth is as invincible as his God.

One of the greatest battles ever fought against wrong was over American slavery. Chief among its heroes was William Lloyd Garrison. The slave-owners were so powerful that to speak openly against slavery was to put one's life in peril. Garrison was seized and put in prison for two years. It was thought that on his release he would be quiet; but he at once started a newspaper to make war upon slavery, and with only a negro boy to assist him. In the first number he wrote: 'I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice.' He was so poor that he often lived on bread and water. He was

everywhere hated and denounced. Once he was seized by a furious mob and dragged through the streets with a rope round his neck. Time after time he escaped as if by a miracle. But the friends of truth and freedom took courage and rallied round him. At length the victory was won, and four millions of slaves were set free.

Garrison afterwards visited this country, and at a great meeting held in his honour he spoke these memorable words: 'Henceforth through all coming time, advocates of justice that are, and are to be, be not discouraged, for you will and you must succeed if you have a righteous cause. No matter how few may be prepared to rally round the standard you may raise, if you walk by justice, if your faith be a faith that cannot be shaken, because it is linked to the eternal throne, it is only a question of time when victory has to come to reward your toils. Slavery—the strongest thing in the world—where is it now? And so it was and so it ever will be, throughout the earth, in every battle for the right.'

If God be for us, who can be against us?

VII

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

‘Because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf.’—i. 29.

VII

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

THE endeavour to reconcile the sufferings of life with the goodness of God has troubled the thoughtful mind from the days of Job. Advancing knowledge has brought no relief from the mystery. On the contrary, a more vivid acquaintance with the vast and varied forms of suffering in the world has deepened our perplexity. When it is affirmed that God is love, the increased sensitiveness of our age lends a fresh force to the protest of nature, which, 'red in tooth and claw, with ravine shrieks against the creed.'

The afflictions of life and its heart-breaking conditions have brought despair to many of the most earnest minds. Of Sir Leslie Stephen it was said, 'He was a rebel against pain, not on

his own account, for he stood his trials well. The sight of the world's tragedy made him an agnostic.' On the other hand, Christian Science, taking its stand on belief in God as all-loving and all-powerful, denies that pain can exist. Divine love and the permission of suffering are held to be contradictory, and therefore pain is to be regarded as a delusion. But the mind cannot find satisfaction in denying the plain facts of experience, nor can the heart be at rest in rebellion against the Author of the world.

In both instances the root of the difficulty lies in the assumption that pain is an evil, and is inflicted needlessly. If only we could feel assured that the suffering is worth while, that it is the necessary path which leads us upwards into fuller life, we should meet it bravely and patiently. But this assurance can come only from within.

The problem seems to stand thus. Love is the highest that is in us, and we cannot think of God as less. But it is love coming into conflict with the terrible realities of life which creates our dilemma. To what purpose, it is asked, is all the suffering of the world, which

man finds himself so powerless to lighten? Those who cry out in anguish and bewilderment against the sorrows of the race are not necessarily rebels against God. They may be nearer to Christ in spirit than many upon whose faith no shadow has fallen because of the poverty of their sympathies.

But it is not on the intellectual plane that relief is to be found. As it is the spiritual nature that raises the problem, so it is through the deepening of our spiritual life that it must be solved. The answer to life's riddle is committed to the soul that loves and trusts and possesses the insight born of suffering. How often do we find that it is not teaching that we need, but the power to see and feel! It is a spiritual awakening that is wanted to shed a new light upon the facts of life and experience. For this reason great sufferers are often the most trustful and thankful. Doubt and despair come mostly to those who look on, while the faith of the stricken waxes more radiant day by day. Countless generations of saints and martyrs have found their trust in eternal love confirmed through suffering.

Jesus is the supreme example of spiritual triumph. After a life of fierce trials and apparent failure, and in view of the final terror, He says, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' It is the Master's spirit that shines in the life of the apostle, who delights to call himself the slave of Jesus Christ. In all his epistles, even those written in the darkest hour, such as the 2 Corinthians and the Philippians, there are frequent exclamations of gladness and trust. His present captivity and loneliness, his anxiety for the churches, his impending trial and possible martyrdom, could not quench his outbursts of joy. In this epistle he makes repeated allusions to his sufferings, but always with cheerfulness and thanksgiving. Let us consider the grounds of his joy amidst afflictions.

He speaks of suffering as a privilege. 'To you it is granted as a favour, not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer in His behalf.'¹

Suffering in itself can never be desired. To shrink from pain is a natural instinct.

¹ i. 29.

Our Lord prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him. He drank it because it was His Father's will. It makes all the difference whether we regard our sufferings as the buffetings of chance or as the appointment of divine grace. To be patient and brave from whatever motive has an uplifting power. But the Christian temper is more ennobling than stoical fortitude. Loving consent is a grander thing than passive submission ; it speaks not of defeat, but of victory. 'We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.' In the Christian view suffering is a sign of God's care for us. The worst calamity would be that we should be left to ourselves, and that any wrong or fault should be allowed to pass. 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' 'To you,' says the apostle, 'to suffer on behalf of Christ hath been granted as a favour ; it is a sign of God's grace that He calls us to difficult tasks. He confers honour upon us in making high demands on our faith and courage, and associating us with Himself in the world's redemption.'

In other passages in this epistle the apostle

refers to suffering as the means by which the spiritual life is (1) developed, and (2) manifested.

1. He recognized an educational value in hardships and trouble. 'This shall turn to my salvation.'¹ This state of things: the reference is to the calumny and opposition of his enemies, who were misrepresenting his motives and seeking to undermine his influence. More trying to the apostle than stripes and imprisonment was the distrust and hostility of his fellow countrymen. When he yearned for sympathy and love he met with jealousy and ill-will. It is pathetic that in a world so full of sorrow we should add to the afflictions of one another. How lightly do we make sad the hearts of those whom the Lord hath not made sad ! By unfriendliness and unkindness we make the world a harder place to live in. We forget that the pains of the mind are more lasting than those of the body, that a wounded spirit is worse than a wounded limb.

In this keen and painful experience the apostle saw a divine purpose. It was included

¹ i. 19.

in the 'all things' that work together for good. His enemies wished only to harass him, 'to raise up affliction for me in my bonds,' but 'it shall turn to my salvation.' It was part of the discipline through which he was to be made perfect. Perhaps the apostle felt the danger to his own soul that lay in continually preaching to others. To be always listened to with submission, and everywhere honoured and obeyed, was an easy path to self-satisfaction and self-will. Criticism and opposition supplied the corrective that was necessary.

2. Again : through suffering the spiritual life is manifested. It not only turns to our own salvation, but it effects the salvation of others. St. Paul lays the greatest stress upon his sufferings as giving power and efficacy to his ministry. It is his 'bonds' that have become manifest in Christ ¹ among the soldiers. His hope is that Christ shall be magnified in his body. ² He is ready to pour out his life-blood as a sacrifice in the service of Christ. ³ There is the closest connexion in his thoughts between service and suffering.

¹ i. 13.

² i. 20.

³ ii. 17.

We are in contact here with an eternal truth. Human redemption is only achieved through vicarious suffering. No man can deliver his own soul. We are saved by the pain and sacrifice of others. All that gives worth to life is built upon the labours and sorrows of past generations. Human society could not go on if men were not continually bearing one another's burdens. There are acts of atonement every day. Parents suffer for their children; friend carries the sorrows of friend. The heart of prophet, preacher, and reformer is pierced by the cries of suffering humanity ere he can bring help and healing.

How much of the moral grandeur and power of the Cross has been lost through viewing it as an isolated event, a single transaction, instead of seeing in it the highest manifestation of God's eternal law of love! Jesus did not die that God might love us. He became incarnate to show us that love is the law of the universe, and that to give ourselves for others is a divine act. Not His death only, but the whole of His life was a sacrifice: it was the complete offering up of

Himself to God in the service of man. Jesus has taught us that there is not one law for Him and another for us. 'Both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one.'¹ He leads us in the path which He took Himself. For us, as for Him, the way of the Cross is the way to fullness of life and power.

The Christian Church has rightly placed the Cross in the centre of its faith. But is its inner meaning always understood? Is it not often believed that the sufferings of the Saviour were only to procure our release from suffering, that He sacrificed Himself that we might escape? Do we not comfort ourselves upon living in days when it is easy to be a Christian, and when the courage of the martyrs is no longer needed? But the demands of Christ are in no way abated. The test and token of discipleship is still the same. It is not simply to believe in Christ's Cross, but through His strength to take up our own, and follow Him whithersoever He goeth.

¹ Heb. ii. 11.

Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
If He's not born in thee, thy heart is still forlorn,
The Cross on Golgotha will never save thy soul :
The Cross in thine own heart alone can make thee
whole :¹

St. Paul rejoiced in his sufferings, which enabled him 'to fill up that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ.'² This passage has given rise to much discussion and perplexity. It seems to teach that the Saviour's sufferings were insufficient ; that it was necessary for the redemption of mankind that His followers should add their sufferings to His. But is there not a profound truth in this ? The world is to be saved by Christ's sacrifice being re-enacted in each of us. We are to continue His redeeming work. The Roman priest teaches that by consecrating bread and wine he can repeat the sacrifice of Calvary. But the only true sense in which Christ's atoning work can be carried on is by the offering up of ourselves. To be 'crucified with Christ' is the secret of influence and power. What a difference it would make to the world if only this truth were impressed

¹ Angelus Silesius (1624-77). ² Col. i. 24.

upon our own hearts, and taught to our children! Men are to be saved by goodness and love. There is an uplifting power in all brave and unselfish lives. When we sacrifice ourselves for others we are showing forth the love of God, for all human love is the manifestation of divine love.

The apostle desires that Christ may be magnified in his body. Not necessarily by martyrdom. He speaks of dying daily,¹ and of always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.² To live for Christ is a harder thing than to yield up our life for Him once for all. Whatever is done or endured in a Christian spirit magnifies Christ. It may be the patient and cheerful fulfilment of our daily work, forbearance under provocation, courage and faith amidst trials.

But it is in patient suffering that the reality and power of divine grace shines forth most clearly. From the 'prisoners of the Lord' there have often come our deepest thoughts of God. Amidst the sombre ritual of the sick-room we have been privileged to witness a

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 31

² 2 Cor. iv. 10,

conquering trust and radiant hope. Yet there is nothing in pain itself to produce serenity. Naturally it would incline us to fretfulness and despondency. The soul that can suffer cheerfully must be possessed of some secret of the Lord. There must be an unseen presence that strengthens and supports, and whose grace enables the spirit to triumph over the flesh. A proof of these words lies before me in a letter just received from a lady who recently lost her father. She writes: 'The contemplation of father's physical condition and his spiritual hopefulness—more than that, serene confidence—will ever prevent me from accepting a theory that the latter is related to the former. Depleted of strength, reduced almost to a phantom with pain and starvation, weary to the last point of weariness, and with hardly an organ of his body doing its work, he still kept an unmoved tranquillity and confidence in a beneficent controller of all things, "a God who means intensely and means good." ' This is an example of how Christ can be magnified in the sufferings of His servants.

Once again : St. Paul speaks of his suffer-

ings as bringing him into more intimate union with Christ. 'That I may know Him . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings.'¹

If suffering is bound up with our very existence it must have some meaning for the Author of our life. We cannot think of the Father of spirits as having no share in the deepest experiences of His children. Does not the very notion of creation imply sacrifice? It involves self-giving, and self-giving means suffering.

The doctrine of the Incarnation teaches us that God approaches man through pain and sacrifice, and it is also through suffering that we must come near to Him. There is nothing that draws hearts together and makes them one like sorrow shared. Ease and prosperity tend to isolate us. It is pain that breaks down the barriers between spirit and spirit, and opens our hearts to God and to our fellow men. It is in the mystery of suffering that the mother comes nearest to the heart of her child. When a friend sits by the bed-side of wasting sickness, he feels a deeper communion

¹ iii. 10.

of spirit with his friend than he ever knew before. It is realized, not through spoken words, but in the silent fellowship of suffering, and in the outflow of his own life in sympathy and love.

It is the sense of loneliness that adds so much to the poignancy of pain. But when we enter into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings we become conscious of a divine friend and companion who has shared our every sorrow. There is no affliction so deep that His sympathy cannot reach it. On the cross He refused the drug that would have relieved His agony, that He might know and understand all, and be able to succour to the utmost.

VIII

OURSELVES AND OTHERS

‘ Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.’—ii. 4.

VIII

OURSELVES AND OTHERS

IMAGINE a being from a higher world visiting this planet without any previous knowledge of its condition: with what amazement and dismay would he witness the discords and wasting strife of human life! He would see the nations of the earth armed against each other, and lavishing upon weapons of destruction the money that should feed and educate their poor. In almost every city he would observe fierce contention between employer and employed. In social life he would look upon the dismal picture of hearts estranged by jealousy, and affections blighted by ill-will. Most disheartening of all would be the spectacle of Christian Churches, which were consecrated to the ministry of peace and goodwill, torn by contention and division.

What remedy would our celestial visitor suggest for this state of things?

Would he offer himself as a ruler and a judge, and propose some rearrangement of the powers, or fresh division of the spoils? It is certain that higher wisdom would see the root of all the evil in human character; that the conflict of nations and the strife of individuals would be declared to be the fruit of personal selfishness. To change this spirit into one of mutual love would appear to be the object of first importance.

But average human nature is disinclined to accept a view which makes demands upon personal effort. It is easier to look to social reformers and legislators to bring in for us a new heaven and a new earth. And yet, if the most perfect social system were established that any State could devise, and the inner life were unchanged, the old evils would return upon us again. For, as Tolstoi has said, 'among men striving each for his own welfare, it would be impossible to find men sufficiently disinterested to manage the capital of humanity

without taking advantage of their position—men who would not again introduce injustice and oppression.’ ‘There is no political alchemy,’ observes Herbert Spencer, ‘by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts.’ In other words, society must be reconstructed from within. The hope of the future lies in each person striving to repress in himself the instinct of selfishness, and in cultivating a thoughtful regard for the welfare of others.

At the best, law is only a clumsy expedient for putting wrong right. No quarrel is ever really settled by force. If a private contention is referred to law, the moral result is worthless. The evil is only accentuated by leaving behind a legacy of ill-will and estrangement. But if the dispute can be arranged by mutual forbearance and love, the ties of friendship are strengthened, and the spiritual wealth of the world is increased. And that which is true of a family is true of the whole brotherhood of mankind. Nothing is gained by taking from one selfish class and giving to another selfish

class. But the peace and happiness of the world are advanced by the diffusion of a spirit of justice and kindness.

How is this spirit to be made to prevail ?

It is a short-sighted view which regards our own interests as apart from those of our fellow creatures. Human society is not a mere aggregation of self-seeking individuals. Like the body and its cells, each exists in reciprocal dependence, and each develops in the development of the other. A selfish policy is always a failure, whether it be between a country and its colonies, or a master and his men. All interests are bound up together. Whatever is held selfishly is lost. If it be money, we become its slave ; if it be knowledge, it fades from the mind ; if it be happiness, it turns to misery. No man can promote his own welfare without benefiting the whole community, nor can he injure himself without injuring others. A recent financial crisis in one country was felt in every city in Europe, and the downfall of millionaires brought trouble to struggling tradesmen throughout the world.

Again : it should be observed that selfish-

ness operates on the material plane. It belongs more particularly to the life of the body. It is only as man awakens to his spiritual nature and destiny that he can escape from 'the lower world within him : moods of tiger, or of ape.' Let it be believed that the physical life is the only life, and it will be said, ' Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' But when man knows himself to be a living soul he will feel the strongest motives to live to the spirit. For if the body be but a temporary vestment, and the soul is destined after death to pass from state to state and from life to life in its onward progress, material objects are felt to be insignificant. When we contemplate the stars, the earth grows small ; and in view of man's immeasurable destiny, the inequalities of the present dwindle into nothing.

Thus, in affirming the spiritual side of our being, wealth and luxury lose much of their tyranny, for they cease to be taken as the standard of worth. The successful man is recognized as the one who has most developed his soul. And as spiritual growth can only be achieved by the triumph of love over

selfishness, it follows that in pursuing our own highest good we are compelled to minister to the good of others.

There can be no greater error than to imagine that selfishness is profitable. It is at war with our deepest instincts, and with the constitution of things. Man can exist only in society, but selfishness is destructive of human society. For where each is seeking his own, and there is no consideration for others, society must go to pieces. Indifference to the claims of others is, therefore, the supreme impiety, for it strikes at the heart of nature. Selfishness is self-destruction, and results from ignorance and delusion. The selfish man believes that by out-witting and over-reaching others, he can add to his own wealth and happiness; but an enlightened self-interest would show him his folly. What he is really seeking is the enlargement of his life. But this can be attained only through his relationship to others. Isolation means moral desolation.

In family affection we mingle our joys and sorrows with those of others, and realize our own life in theirs. Life grows fuller as

interests expand, and we are drawn into wider sympathies with friend, neighbour, or citizen. We live by the interaction of outward and inward forces. Whatever lives to itself dies. To confine life is to smother it. The more we give ourselves, the greater selves we have to give. The larger the outflow of love, the greater the inflow of life.

This is the principle which underlies the teaching of Jesus concerning possessions. Riches are desirable only as they enlarge our social sympathies, and help us to fulfil the duties of brotherhood. Their danger lies in creating a fictitious sense of independence and isolating us from the life of others. What the unjust steward did by fraud, men are bidden to do in a noble way, to use money to make friends—so to apply wealth that it will bind others closer to us, and make our life one with the lives of our fellow men. Fearful punishment awaited the man whose money was only a means of selfish enjoyment. In trying to gain the world he lost his soul, that is himself.

Thus, according to the Master, the true self-

love is achieved through making the interests of others our own interests. The higher self is realized through the sacrifice of the lower self. In other words, by losing our life we save it.

Selfishness destroys everything. Whatever is possessed of wealth or knowledge, strength or beauty, all is degraded by selfishness. A 'spoiled' child is one who has missed the purpose of its life. Intended to bring brightness and joy to the home, it has become a trouble to every one, and most of all to itself. And what has spoiled it? Not the affection and kindness of its parents, but their neglect to train it to consider others. They indulged their affections at the child's expense. They forgot that love can only grow by doing deeds of love, and that the life that is always receiving and never giving is bound to become selfish. The sympathies that are not active are withered by the sunshine that would have ripened them.

The world is full of 'spoiled' lives, of men and women capable of noble things, with education, refinement and leisure, whose exist-

ence is a bitterness and a failure. They have not learned to work for others. Perhaps they have sought in knowledge and art the happiness that is only to be found in homely and disinterested service.

The futility of this aim is powerfully brought out in one of Tennyson's earliest poems, 'The Palace of Art.' The soul built for herself a lordly palace, full of beauty, where it might dwell apart from the herd of men with their sordid cares and struggles. Communing with herself, she says—

'All these are mine,
And let the world have peace or wars,
'Tis one to me.'

'I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all.'

She took her throne:
She sat betwixt the shining Oriels,
To sing her songs alone.

But the beauty and knowledge which she tried to enjoy selfishly turned to corruption. Despair and dread of herself seized her. With

none to love, the palace became a solitude ;
she discovered that—

He that shuts out love in turn shall be
Shut out from love, and on her threshold lie
Howling in outer darkness.

It was only when she had mourned her sin, and returned to the palace bringing others with her to enjoy the beauty, that she realized through love the happiness that was lost by selfishness.

This is a truth of universal experience. We have all found that our self-centred hours have been the most discordant and unhappy, and that the chief cure for depression and despondency was to interest ourselves in matters that were not personal—that is, in other people's troubles and joys. Was it not Abraham Lincoln who said, 'To ease another's heart-ache is to forget one's own.' And it is not only to forget the ache, but to add to life an element of surpassing joy.

A large proportion of the unkindness in the world is due as much to thoughtlessness and inattention as to direct faults of heart. The

apostle suggests that we do not sufficiently consider the lot of others, or try by an effort of imagination to put ourselves in their place. There is present in human nature a rich fund of kindness and sympathy, if only it could be evoked. It sometimes meets us in unexpected places. When St. Paul and his companions were shipwrecked at Malta, they were surprised to receive so much pity and consideration from the natives. The historian records that The barbarians¹ showed us no common kindness ; for they kindled a fire, and received us all, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.' Their minds could readily realize the meaning of cold, hunger and weariness, and their pity instantly responded.

But for most of us the sufferings of the world are out of sight, and are seldom obtruded upon our view. [' If suddenly,' says ~~Mr~~ Ruskin, ' in the midst of the enjoyments of the palate and lightnesses of heart of a London dinner-party, the walls of the chamber were parted, and through their gap the nearest

¹ Does not signify uncivilized, but merely of non-Greek birth.

human beings who were famishing and in misery were borne into the midst of the company feasting and fancy free ; if, pale from death, horrible in destitution, broken by despair, body by body they were laid upon the soft carpet, one beside the chair of every guest—would only the crumbs of the dainties be cast to them ? Would only a passing glance, a passing thought be vouchsafed to them ? Yet the actual facts, the real relation of each Dives and Lazarus, are not altered by the intervention of the house-wall between the table and the sick-bed—by the few feet of ground (how few !) which are, indeed, all that separate the merriment from the misery.’ J

And this consideration applies not only to physical want and distress, but to the troubles which arise from the mind and character, and which are scarcely less hard to bear. We are not sufficiently thoughtful of the sensibilities of others ; how needlessly we cause them pain ! We are too engrossed, says the apostle, with our own concerns and our own point of view. We need to try to enter into the lives of our fellow men, to look at things from their stand-

point and realize their feelings. How much do peace and good-will in the home, in the Church, and in the world depend upon 'looking to the things of others,' restraining our self-assertion, and courteously taking account of the opinions and sentiments of those who may differ from us.

IX

JESUS AS LORD

‘Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name ; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’—ii. 5-11.

IX

JESUS AS LORD

THESE profound words are one of the great defences of Christian doctrine. Yet they were not written to teach theology. The apostle had in view the simple and practical aim of encouraging us to become like Jesus as we know Him.

It is a melancholy thought that a passage which was written to promote union should have been the occasion of so much division. From the first great council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) until the present day the centuries have been filled with strife in attempts to explain the mode of the divine existence. And yet if that knowledge were attained so that we could understand all mysteries, according to St. Paul it would count for nothing without

disinterested love. To be like Jesus in spirit, to possess His patience, humility, and love, is of infinitely greater importance than to be able to explain His attributes.

Leaving, then, the mystery of our Lord's pre-existence, let us fix our thoughts upon those aspects of His life which we can understand, and which appeal to us as an example. Two principal facts are stated in the text—

I. That Jesus is to be acknowledged as Lord by the whole creation. II. That His exaltation has been achieved by a life of self-sacrificing love.

I. The title 'Lord,' as applied to Jesus, is characteristic of St. Paul's writings. 'Jesus is Lord' is the dominant note of his theology. 'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness.'¹ 'We preach . . . Jesus as Lord.'² And here it is stated that every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. What is implied by this title?

Let us dismiss from our minds those ideas of dignity and rank which are associated with

¹ Eph. vi. 24.

² 2 Cor. iv. 5.

earthly rulers. Outward pomp and grandeur had no worth for Jesus. He discouraged mere epithets of praise. One of His most solemn utterances was a warning to those who thought that they could honour Him by calling Him Lord, Lord. The pre-eminence of Jesus was spiritual, and could only be acknowledged by spiritual response. To possess His spirit was to honour Him. To walk upon the sea, and command the winds and even raise the dead, in His view constituted no claim to homage. Power in the grasp of tyranny might be used to crush and destroy. It is the moral qualities which are behind the power that we worship. Whether in God or man, only holiness and love can command our reverence and affection. To raise the body out of the grave is a less divine act than to raise the soul out of sin.

It was the consciousness of His spiritual power which led the early disciples to see in Jesus of Nazareth the Christ, the Son of God. Their allegiance did not depend upon mighty works, for to the mind of that age these could be performed by evil as well as good

agents. They accepted Him as the Messiah because of what they found Him to be. They saw in Him human nature perfected by the indwelling of the divine spirit—God manifested in the flesh. In Jesus all their highest ideals of life were realized, and the power of His spirit kindled into a flame their own hopes and aspirations.

And this was the ground of St. Paul's faith. His belief in Jesus as the exalted Son of God was not deduced from metaphysical speculation concerning the nature of deity, but from the facts of his own experience. There is no evidence in his epistles of any attempt to reconcile the monotheism of Jewish theology with the doctrine of the Trinity. He writes not as a philosopher, but as a religious man reflecting upon the power of Christ in his soul.

His devotion to Jesus began in that never-to-be-forgotten hour when on the road to Damascus he saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 'It pleased God,' he said, 'to reveal His Son in me.' Jesus became his spiritual deliverer. 'What the law could not do in that it was weak, God accomplished in

him through Jesus Christ.' At the moment of his conversion he felt the majesty of the power which he did not recognize, and asked in awe: Who art Thou, Lord? And the word 'Lord,' uttered at first with imperfect understanding, gained in meaning and transcendency as the power of Jesus became more sovereign in his life.

There is no limit to the veneration and love felt for those who inspire us with what is best. They gain an ascendancy over us with which nothing can compare. The reverence and devotion felt for the person of Jesus is the most striking fact in the spiritual history of mankind. High above all our various forms and creeds the figure of Jesus rises in undisputed supremacy. He is acknowledged to be the life, the truth, and the way. We worship God clothed with the attributes of Jesus. His life is our example, His spirit the inspiration of holy effort. In fellowship with Him we find a purer conscience and a higher self.

If it were not so, if Jesus did not embody the highest of which we feel ourselves to be capable, and enable us to realize it, then every

knee would not bow to Him, nor every tongue confess Him to be Lord. Only the highest has a right to command us, and it is because we see this perfectly fulfilled in Jesus that we acknowledge His claim to our obedience and love. And the adoration given to Jesus upon earth is but the faint echo of that which He receives from all higher beings. Therefore, with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify His glorious name.

II. How was this pre-eminence achieved? The exaltation of Jesus was the result of His earthly career. It did not proceed from birth or prerogative, but was the reward of obedience to God. He lived a life of self-renouncing love, wherefore God highly exalted Him. His glory was the fruit of His character. To know this truth is to enter into the deepest secret of the Saviour's life. It teaches us that pre-eminence can never be conferred from without, but must be achieved from within. It is to be won not by self-assertion but by self-surrender. Earthly rulers founded their greatness upon ruined homes, and maintained it by the toil

and suffering of their subjects. 'Not so shall it be among you : but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant ; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your bond-servant : even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' ¹

This was a complete reversal of human judgement. Humility as a virtue had no place in the moral philosophy of the ancients. The word which expresses this Christian grace was, with rare exceptions, used only to describe that which was servile and base. Its transformed and exalted sense is due to the example and spirit of Jesus. And yet, after wellnigh two thousand years, how little has this spirit penetrated human life ! The glamour of outward show, of rank, and position, and material success, still holds captive the minds of men. To false ideas of greatness may be traced most of the troubles in the world. Jealousy and heart-burnings in private life, social antipathies, divisions within the Church, the cruel and

¹ Matt. xx. 26-28.

fatuous lust for wealth and power, have their source in vainglory.

Our Lord met this temptation upon the threshold of His ministry. He conquered it after prolonged suffering and prayer. The tempter invited Him to accept the current notions concerning the Messiah, and to win dominion by worldly means. He was shown an easy and alluring path to success if only He would work through ostentation and display. Let Him appeal to the vulgar passions of the multitude, dazzle them by His miracles, and found His claims upon physical wonders rather than upon moral power; let Him render homage to Satan, and the world would be at His feet.

It was a constant concern to Jesus lest His disciples should fall under this powerful infatuation. He recognized it as the peculiar temptation of public life. When the seventy returned exulting in their success and declaring that even the devils were subject unto them, Jesus recalled them to the consideration of their own spiritual state. 'Howbeit in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto

you ; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.' ¹

The example of Jesus teaches us the true nature of humility. To be humble is not to think meanly of ourselves. The Bible has as much to say about the greatness of human nature as of its littleness. The language of those who disparage themselves may sometimes veil pride and insincerity. We need to be reminded that humility is not an affected manner, nor self-depreciation. It is the surrender of self in devotion to God, and the service of our fellow men. 'Learn of Me,' said Jesus, 'for I am meek and lowly in heart.' The humility of Jesus contained no element of weakness. His bearing towards others was always marked by dignity and strength. He taught with authority. He accepted as of right the love and veneration of His disciples. 'Ye call Me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am.' He reproved those who sought to turn Him aside from His chosen path.

It was from the consciousness of His divine

¹ Luke x. 17-20.

power and authority that there sprang the impulse to perform the lowliest acts of service. The desire to serve is a quality of true greatness. 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God, and goeth unto God . . . took a towel, and girded Himself, and began to wash the disciples' feet.'¹

In a life so pre-occupied with devotion to God and the service of man there could be no room for selfish ambition. It has been said if we would learn our littleness let us contemplate the starry heavens. But it is not by taking the measure of ourselves in the universe that we overcome pride. Pride is the worship of self, and it can only be cast out by love.

Jesus Christ 'emptied Himself'; but in doing so He took 'the form of a servant.' Only through service can we escape from self. The Saviour has taught us that renunciation is not the goal of life. He emptied Himself, not that He might live the life of an ascetic, but that He might become the servant of all. Submission and surrender look to some purpose

¹ John xiii. 3-5.

beyond themselves. Life is to be fulfilled not by giving up but by positive achievement. The supreme worth of renunciation is found only when it opens a door to higher usefulness. Jesus would allow nothing to stand between Him and the service of man. The dignities of the heavenly world were resigned that He might do God's will upon the earth. Heaven would possess for Him a deeper blessedness when He brought others to share it with Him. This was the joy that was set before Him, for the sake of which He endured the cross, despising the shame.

How slow are His followers to learn the spirit of their Master! Many who are blessed with social position, education, and refinement, take their stand upon their privileges, and make these a reason for holding aloof from the ignorance and misery of the people. In contrast to Jesus, they assert their superior rank or intelligence, and will not deign to enter into sympathy with those beneath them, or try to understand their feelings. They dwell apart in their comfortable homes and refined surroundings, and refuse to mingle with the poor,

or expose themselves to sights of coarseness and squalor. For such persons the Incarnation can have no real meaning. Its central truth is that the world is to be saved by goodness and love coming into actual contact with sin and misery. The Saviour did not pity us from another world, or appoint others to act in His stead. He left His exalted position that He might Himself draw near to the very heart of our sorrows and sins, and raise us by personal sympathy and love. 'The servant is not greater than his Lord.'

We learn from the example of Jesus not to attach too much importance to success. A single life may be too short to see the fruit of great deeds and principles. It was His lot to be misunderstood by His friends and persecuted by His fellow countrymen. During His earthly career He possessed none of those distinctions by which the world judges greatness. He wielded no political power, owned no lands, founded no school, wrote no books. His life ended in apparent failure. Yet He will be held in everlasting remembrance. His name will endure for ever, not because of the power

that He won, but by reason of the power that He has given. He imbued with His own spirit a few followers, who felt instinctively that no violence could put an end to a life so filled with divine power and beauty. The loss was only for a moment. He appeared to them again, and continued to be with them in Spirit, and ruled their life more completely than when He was with them in the flesh. And through them He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

To accept our limitations ; to do God's will faithfully under whatever conditions we may be placed ; to give ourselves ungrudgingly in the service of others, and to be turned aside by neither praise nor blame,—this is the way to eternal influence and power. Whatever temporal defeat such lives may suffer, their labours must end in final and complete triumph, for are they not sharers with their Lord in the world's redemption ?

X

WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION

‘So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure.’—ii. 12, 13.

X

WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION

IT is not well to be always under the influence of a commanding personality. The weaker will may come to be dominated by the stronger, and the cultivation of our own judgement and character may be neglected. Against this danger the apostle utters a warning. He exhorts the Christians at Philippi to self-reliance. Do not, he says, depend upon me. 'Work out your own salvation—not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.' In depending upon yourselves you are depending upon God, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.

This passage brings together the two great ideas upon which religion rests—God and the

human will. Our conception of divine things varies as one or the other is emphasized. Calvin, following St. Augustine, insisted so strongly upon God's sovereignty, that man was regarded as passive in the hands of his Creator. The great religions of the East, Hinduism and Buddhism, lay all the stress upon the human will. The key-note of those systems is, 'Work out your own salvation.' The power which saves you is of yourself. The chains that bind you are of your own forging, the virtue that delivers you is of your own merit. Are you unsuccessful and unhappy? Then look not to circumstances for the cause, but to your own character. The misery that you suffer is the result of seed sown long ago, perhaps in this life, perhaps in some previous life. Blame no one but yourself. If you would be happy, put in right seed and happiness will follow. It is not repentance that avails but amendment, not tears but an altered life. Cease regretting and complaining, and begin to adjust your life to the laws of the universe, and all things will be yours.

There is no need to disparage this teaching for the sake of exalting our Christian religion. It is the noblest element in Eastern faith, and it is a truth too much neglected by ourselves. Will power is not so strong in human nature that we can afford to discourage its cultivation. There is something stern and grand in the conception of those who, instead of leaning upon others, or repining at their lot, frankly take all the condemnation to themselves, and strive manfully to retrieve their past and work out their own salvation. It is one side of religious truth, but it is not the whole truth, and it is not the gospel truth. It omits the good news of a Father's love, of the Saviour's Cross, and of the Holy Spirit that helpeth our infirmities. It is silent about those truths which are the most inspiring cause of human effort, and which have done more than all else to enkindle the heart, and strengthen the will towards right.

The apostle's own experience had taught him the weakness of man's unaided efforts, and his futile struggle with the flesh had shattered his faith in the victorious power of

the human will. Accordingly the key-note of his message is not man's will but God's grace, not what we can do, but what is done for us. The freedom of the human will is indeed affirmed. A solemn emphasis is laid upon man's responsibility. Jesus, who said, 'Apart from Me ye can do nothing,' also declared that every one would be judged according to his deeds. The apostle who insisted most strongly upon the sovereignty of divine grace, and spoke of man as clay in the hands of the potter, wrote: 'What a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'

Agés of bitter controversy have failed to reconcile these two truths. But why not accept them as they stand? Both are in harmony with the facts of human life. It is certain that man must work out his own salvation; it is equally certain that the impulse, and the power to do, come from a source that is not of him. 'I, yet not I,' is the experience of every man in his most exalted moments.

Salvation is not an outward state to be conferred, but an inward condition to be attained. Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven is

within us. St. Paul's conception of salvation was holiness, the perfected life of the soul. In the nature of things this must be worked out by serious personal effort.

Will-power is the foundation of all moral progress. If heaven could be bestowed upon us without any exertion of our own it would be an evil and not a good. All real good must be achieved from within. The child at school learns this truth often with tears. He is taught that it is necessary to work out the sum for himself if he would attain to knowledge; that he must strive to construe the difficult sentence by his own intelligence if he would master the language. The best teacher is not the one who makes himself most necessary to us, but he who helps us to do without him by stimulating our own faculties. When a young man enters upon business there is but one word that he should hear, 'Work out your own salvation. Upon your own industry and ability depends your future success.' To tell him that his father has achieved prosperity for him is a sentence of death.

In looking to the future, parents are natur-

ally anxious to spare their children the sorrows and disappointments which they have known, and to remove from their path temptation and difficulty; and something may be done in this way by wise and loving teaching. But no affection or solicitude on the part of others can set aside the law that every one must work out his own salvation. We buy wisdom at our own expense. Virtues have no root that are not tried by temptation. A creed that is inherited turns to ashes unless it is vitalized by our own thought and experience. A truth for others may be a lie for us, because it awakens no response in the soul. Amongst the greatest blessings of life is early religious instruction. But when this is received, not as a talent to be improved by diligence, but as a legacy to make things easy for us, the good becomes an evil. By living upon the past and not striving to win truth for ourselves we become feeble in will-power, and go through life without intelligent convictions and spiritual earnestness.

There is hardly a greater evil in the present day than the habit of looking to others for

the direction of our spiritual affairs. It is a practice which is common to all Churches alike. The energies of life are used up in business and pleasure, and only an exhausted interest is left for the things of the soul. It comes easier to human nature to resign serious thinking to others and seek salvation through the offices of the Church. Is not this the secret of the wide-spread demand for authoritative guidance? 'Give us some definite ruling,' it is said, 'that will save us the trouble and responsibility of thinking things out for ourselves.' Our Lord refused to satisfy this desire. When the theologians asked Him by what authority He taught, He replied by another question, 'By what authority did John the Baptist teach?' Jesus made no pronouncement upon the subject. He left men to work out their own salvation in the matter of religious thought. Let them consult their own conscience, study their own records, exercise the power of judging which God had given them. He told them to consider their relation to their own children when they would know God's relation to themselves. Let them develop their own

spiritual life in the service of God and man if they would attain to clearness of knowledge. If the Church or death were able to confer a state that was not the outcome of our will and character, it could not be called our own. That alone is our own which we have worked out for ourselves.

But does not this teaching destroy our dependence upon God? No: for it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do. He gives us the desire, and strengthens us to perform it.

The impulse may seem to come from ourselves, or from a passage of Scripture, or from some aspect of nature, or from a strain of music or a noble poem; or perhaps the heart may burn in loving converse with a friend. But whatever the seeming source may be, that which awakens us to higher things is from God. To Him we must ascribe all that is best in our life. The unselfish thought, the commanding sense of duty, the vision of goodness, the aspiration after truth, are God working in us; and our part is the working out of these promptings in deed and character.

Is not the whole of life the working out of ideas and impulses that are given to us? The type is not ours; we are not the architects but the builders. All nature is striving to work out that which is within it. Wrapped up in every seed there is a germ, a type, and the energy of each living thing is put forth to realize the law of its being. But that which the plant and the flower do unconsciously, man accomplishes with purpose and intelligence. He acts along with the divine power, and yields himself to the guidance of the Spirit.

The presence and movement of the divine Spirit within our heart is a neglected truth which the Church is only beginning slowly to recover. 'Thou art, O Father, so really within ourselves, where we seldom or never look, that Thou art to us a hidden God.'¹ Our greatest need is to become conscious of the divine indwelling; to realize that God is not only above the world but in the world; not only our Ruler but the Quickener of our souls. We must learn to find Him in the secret

¹ Fénelon.

places of our own life. When St. Catherine of Siena was deprived by her parents of every opportunity for prayer and meditation, she made 'a little oratory within her own soul,' where she found herself always in the presence of God. Strange that we should look for God everywhere but within ourselves. Yet it is only because He is within us that we are able to recognize Him in the world around us. It is through His mind that we contemplate the wonder and loveliness of His works. The word of God would have come to man in vain if that word had not already been within his heart.

This is the profound teaching in St. Augustine's doctrine of grace, and which he pressed so strongly as to seem at times almost to destroy the reality of free will. Man could not seek God unless God already possessed him. He possesses us that we may desire to possess Him. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as mere natural goodness. Whether it is recognized or not, all earnest thought and effort is God working in us. Is not our whole nature from Him, and does not

His Spirit act continuously upon every part of our life? To obey a divine impulse is a religious act, to neglect it is to quench the Spirit.

The Bible gives us a larger view of the religious life than is common to much of our present-day thinking. It bids the artisan to realize that his skill is sacred, and the husbandman that his knowledge is given to him, and the student that his insight is from God, and the artist and musician that their genius cometh down from the Father of Light, from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift. If an act were only of self it would end in self, and bring no good to others. Because it is of God it is one with the divine will, and part of the universal order, and results in spiritual influence and blessing to our fellow men.

It is in recognizing all our powers of heart and mind to be from God, and using them faithfully and for the good of others, that we work out our salvation. The divine life is striving to realize itself in us, and is making its presence felt in every pure thought and noble aspiration. But the flesh lusteth against

the spirit ; the lower self is at war with the higher self. This is the eternal conflict of the soul, the problem and burden of all creeds. But what an unequal conflict ! The animal self is full-grown, and in the history of our race has incalculable ages behind it. The spiritual self is still feeble and in process of development. What need to keep the heart with all diligence if the spirit is to prevail against the flesh !

It is with good reason that the apostle urges us to 'work out' our salvation, for it is no easy duty that is committed to us. It is a great and solemn task, demanding the most earnest and sustained effort. And yet how lightly do we regard the improvement of the soul ! Instead of making it our chief concern we allow almost every other interest to come before it. How little thought, or prayer, or self-discipline are we willing to put into it ! Many delay the cultivation of the spiritual life until the force of habit has become too strong for them. They are no longer able to direct their thoughts, or summon their will-power. They have not energy enough left to

save their souls. The power which God gave them for working out their salvation has been spent on the pleasures of the world.

Within certain limits each one must determine for himself the lines along which his salvation is to be worked out. Human nature is so infinitely varied, and the spiritual life manifests itself under such diverse conditions, that no strict system of rules can be laid down governing its development. But two things may be affirmed as absolutely necessary for all men : prayer and work.

1. Since every good impulse is inspired by God, it is of supreme importance to keep in union with Him. Our constant aim must be to realize the divine presence within us, and to come into contact with God in our own souls. By neglecting prayer and meditation we cut ourselves off from the source of power.

2. But God works in us not only the willing but the doing. Feelings are not given us merely to be enjoyed, but as motives to action. To indulge in beautiful thoughts and sentiments that are not worked out in life is to destroy character at its roots. In the words of

Bishop Butler: 'Going over the theory of virtue in one's thoughts, talking well, and drawing fine pictures of it: this is so far from necessarily or certainly conducing to form a habit of it in him who thus employs himself, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and render it gradually more insensible, i.e. form a habit of insensibility to all moral considerations.'¹ Referring to the danger of mere passive emotion, Professor James advises that we should not even listen to a concert without compelling ourselves to perform also some kind and considerate act for the sake of preserving the balance between feeling and will-power.² The law of life is: 'This do, and thou shalt live.' Feelings may ebb and flow, but right doing is always possible—

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire that in the heart resides,
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides;
But tasks, in hours of insight willed,
May be through hours of gloom fulfilled.³

¹ *Analogy*, chap. v.

² *Text-Book of Psychology*, p. 148.

³ Matthew Arnold.

The divine inworking is urged by the apostle as a motive to earnestness. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in you, to bring about His good pleasure. Salvation is to be worked out with fear and trembling. A sense of awe broods over the earnest mind as it realizes the risks that are involved. It is faith in God, the consciousness of the divine indwelling, that enables us to face the dangers with hope and strength.

Two causes tend to paralyse effort : loneliness and discouragement. But as co-workers with God we have the joy of fellowship. 'He is working in us.' And when our will is at one with His, ultimate attainment is assured.

XI

LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE

‘Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life; that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither labour in vain.’—ii. 14–16.

XI

LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE

CHRISTIANITY had its origin in a life, and it is through the lives of its disciples that it must win its way in the world. Powerful as the effect of preaching has been, this cannot be regarded as the most vital influence in the spread of the Christian religion. It was not so at the beginning, and it has never been so in any age of the Church. 'Christianity began with the joining of heart to heart. Eye looked into eye. The living voice struck upon the living ear. And it is precisely such a uniting of personalities, such an action of man on man, that ever since Jesus spoke has effected the unceasing renewal of Christianity. Christianity has not grown to be what it is, has not maintained and enlarged itself, by

reason of books being read—no, not even by reason of the Bible's being read from generation to generation. The Christian, whether a clergyman or a layman, has sought with his heart after the hearts of his fellow men. Christianity is an uninterrupted life.'¹

Even the force of the spoken word depends upon the sympathy and conviction with which it is uttered. The appeal that moves the conscience has its source in the character of the speaker. It is only powerful when he becomes one with the truth that he utters. From his own soul there radiates an energy that stirs into action the spiritual life of others. Eloquent speech that has no conviction behind it is felt to be hollow and ineffective, while the simplest words spoken from the heart carry an irresistible influence.

When truth, gentleness, and love shine in the daily life of the mother, the children are unconsciously moulded by her gracious spirit. A noble and high-minded teacher creates an atmosphere in which falsehood and cowardice

¹ Dr. C. R. Gregory, *The Canon and the Text of the New Testament*, pp. 44, 45.

cannot live. It is rightly held that the 'atmosphere' of the school is of paramount importance. But the 'atmosphere' should not mean particular creeds and catechisms, but the spiritual influence and moral force of the teachers. A person of narrow, angular mind will degrade the loftiest truths, whilst one of inspired feeling will teach ordinary subjects in such a way as to ennoble life and awaken insight.

A faithful workman, by simply being what he is, elevates the tone of a factory. Two or three earnest members are the inspiration of a church, and save it from decay. This was the thought of Jesus when He said, 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' By the pervasive influence of renewed character His gospel was to spread from heart to heart. Its divine origin was to be attested, not by physical miracles or by clever advocacy, but by changed and ennobled lives. 'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, that ye love one another.'

The martyr Justin, writing soon after the apostolic age, tells how, as a seeker after truth

he was led to embrace the Christian religion by witnessing the holiness of its followers and their constancy under persecution. To this he attributes the chief cause of the diffusion of the Faith. 'We who formerly placed our greatest pleasure in acquiring wealth and possessions now bring all we have into a common stock, and impart to every one in need,—we who hated and destroyed each other, and, on account of the difference of manners refused to live with men of a different tribe, now, since the appearance of Christ, live on terms of familiar intercourse with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us without a cause to live conformably to the perfect precepts of Christ; to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope.'¹

This argument, which was once the vindication of the Christian religion, has now become its embarrassment. The contradiction between creed and practice is the chief weakness of Christianity at the present time. In an age that judges strictly, the question is persistently

¹ Bishop Kaye's translation, p. 90.

asked, Where is the miracle? Is the Church any better than the world? It is the absence of these positive proofs that is largely responsible for the neglect of organized religion. Neither criticism nor poverty can enfeeble a cause that is inspired by the spirit of service and sacrifice, and wealth and learning cannot keep it alive when it is selfish and worldly. Every important revival in the Church has been a revival of character. 'Outward hostility has only been effective when the lives of professing Christians have ceased to guide and inspire. The movement which led to the break-away of Northern Europe from the Papacy did not turn on the ninety-five theses which Luther nailed on the church door at Wittenberg, but on the unsatisfactory lives of priests and monks.'¹

It has been a fatal mistake to make witnessing for Christ depend so much upon spoken words and prescribed forms. Character is the supreme thing, and verbal expression may be the least important. Forms are often obeyed as a matter of custom, and a confession may

¹ Peile, *Bampton Lecture*, p. 17.

have no spiritual value. There is nothing particularly impressive in the recital of a creed. But when the avowed belief in God the Father shows itself in the spirit of brotherhood, in kindness to the poor, and charity to all, it is charged with spiritual power. When Bishop Fraser saw rough Lancashire colliers risking their lives for their comrades, he remarked: 'We preach Christ, these men practise it.' Their unselfishness was felt to be a ray of divine love, and it kindled other hearts with a desire to be brave.

The true Christian has little to say about himself; like the artist, he will wish to reveal himself in his works. He first sees and feels beautiful things and then expresses them in his deeds. His ideal is to be like the heavens which 'declare the glory of God.' Yet 'there is no speech nor language, their voice is not heard.' They let their light shine, and the divine mystery is revealed.

This is the truth which Browning so beautifully teaches us in the poem 'Pippa Passes.' He tells us how a poor lonely girl, a silk-winder, of whom no one seemed to take

any notice, became a power for good to all sorts of people. She found out that the most important thing is not what we shall do but what we shall be. She made up her mind that she would just try to be herself, and not pretend to be any one else. And by being pure and loving and cheerful, she became a teacher and a saviour of many, though she knew it not.

Why should inspiration be so often restricted to words, as though God inspired men to write truth, but not to live it? The Bible is not a repository of texts, but a record of deeds and achievements wrought out under the influence of the Spirit. 'The divine word' is strictly the lives of the saints; it is God declaring Himself through human experience. The truths that holy men uttered had power with the world just because they first had power over themselves. Before the apostles preached Christ they were 'apprehended of Christ.' They were seized and possessed and mastered by the Christ-spirit. The condition of all achievement is that we should be grasped by the idea or motive: as Milton said, he who

would write an epic poem must first live one. The truths that we hold matter little, the truths that hold us are of incalculable power.

It is possible to concern ourselves too much with the religious opinions of our fellow men ; to spend our energy in trying to win them over to our own particular way of thinking. The Church is ever busy discussing new methods of appeal and forming new machinery 'to get hold of' the people. What is needed most is that each one within the fold should earnestly set about the improvement of his own character as the condition of influence and usefulness. This is the thought that St. Paul urges upon his fellow ministers at Corinth : 'By manifestation of the truth to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.'¹ Not by discussion, but by being true, the truth is made manifest, and every man's conscience is convinced of it.

The highest service we can render to the world is to cultivate our own souls ; to bring

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

to perfection our spiritual nature that the heavenly truth may shine through us. If we possess a nobler creed than others, let us strive with all our might to live it, and, like the light, it will attract by its own influence. For character is a spiritual force that acts directly upon the lives of others, whatever their religious belief. The qualities that are in us tend to evoke the same qualities in our neighbour. Deep calleth unto deep. The wrong spirit which we resent is generally the response to our own. It is the reflex of our thoughts and feelings. Just as selfishness awakens selfishness, and anger stirs anger, so faith and love are enkindled by faith and love.

It is a profound and eternal truth that connects redemption with the Incarnation. Salvation can only come to men through the divine nature manifested in the human. The world is not to be redeemed by the sayings of the wise, but by the lives of the good. It is the life that is the light of men. This is the supreme power of the Christian religion. Other teachers before Jesus uttered great and noble truths. But Christ is unique in that He per-

fectly revealed the divine nature in Himself. He Himself was the truth which He preached ; and all who would influence the world for good must themselves become the way, the truth, and the life. That which was transcendent in Jesus is to be realized by the humblest of His followers. As every disciple is called upon to repeat in himself the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, so he is to manifest the incarnation. The glory of God that was seen in the face of Jesus is to shine in the life of every believer. For in the last analysis, and to go down to the very root of the Christian religion, to be a Christian is not to acquire a notion of God, or even an abstract doctrine of His paternal love ; it is to live over, within ourselves, the inner, spiritual life of Christ, and by the union of our heart with His to feel in ourselves the presence of a father and the reality of our filial relation to Him.' ¹

The apostle mentions several ways in which the filial consciousness reveals itself. A child

¹ Sabatier, *Religion of Authority and of the Spirit*, p. 293.

of God will do all things without murmurings and disputings. Because he is at one with the divine will he lives in an atmosphere of peace and harmony. He does not need to dispute, for he gains influence by the quiet power of a consistent life. Complaining and contention are a sign that we have no faith in God, that we do not at heart believe that the world is ordered by wisdom and love. To live as a child of God is to accept God's will, to be at peace with the laws that direct our destiny, and with the things that are appointed for our discipline. Amidst outward discouragement and trial he will possess a quiet and untroubled mind. Disappointment will not embitter him, for he knows that he has a place of his own to fill, and that his work has been given him to do.

And in all his conduct he will be blameless and sincere. Uprightness and integrity will mark every act. He will so live that no wrongdoing can be justly charged against him. Above all things he will be sincere. He is incapable of falsehood or unreality, for he lives in the consciousness of the divine presence.

He obeys the inner voice and renders the service of the heart. And because his eye is single his whole body is full of light. These souls that are pure and true, whom nothing can bribe or turn aside, live already in the eternal world, and bring the immortal life into the things of time. Amidst a 'crooked and perverse generation,' they demonstrate in their own character the supremacy of righteousness and the reality of God. For how can men deny that which they see, or doubt the fatherhood of God when it is reflected in the love and beauty of a human soul?

The apostle adds that the results of his labours would follow him into the next life, and that his happiness then would depend upon the good that he had done here. There would be no rejoicing for him in the 'Day of Christ' if he did not meet with those whom he had helped to bring there. If there were none in heaven to owe him a debt of love, then his life must be confessed a failure, he had 'run in vain and laboured in vain.' Two things will meet us in the other world: our character, and the good that we have done to

others. This is the treasure to be laid up in heaven. But these two are one. For only as our own souls grow and expand can we radiate helpful influence, and guide others into the path of life.

XII

THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT

‘Beware of the concision : for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.’

iii. 2, 3.

XII

THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT

THE question at issue between the apostle and his opponents involved nothing less than the existence of Christianity. It was an attempt on the part of professed friends to bring back the old religion under a new name. If they had succeeded, the Christian faith would have perished at its birth, crushed under a dead weight of ceremonialism. St. Paul had learned from his own struggles the dangers of this system. The severity of his condemnation sprang from the recollection of what he had suffered, and of the years in which he had sought peace for his soul and found none.

The statement that he was a Pharisee is equivalent to telling us that he was once among the most fanatical defenders of the

national religion. The Pharisees stood to Judaism in the same relation as the Puritans to Protestantism, and the Jesuits to Romanism. They simply carried out the accepted beliefs of their age in the most relentless and uncompromising spirit.

What, then, were those beliefs? In spite of the solemn protests and warnings of the prophets the religion of the nation had gradually degenerated into a hard, mechanical legalism. God was regarded as a law-giver, and the Pentateuch as a divinely inspired system of rules by which men were to live. But the common people were held to be incapable of reading it for themselves: it required explanation and development. This need brought into existence the scribes, who applied the law to fresh cases as they arose, and elaborated an ever-increasing multitude of rules, which came eventually to have the force of divine authority. In the words of Schürer: 'Nothing was left to free personality, everything was placed under the bondage of the letter. At every step, at the work of his calling, at prayer, at meals, at home and

abroad, from early morning till late in the evening, from youth to old age, the dead, the deadening formula awaited him.¹ Thus religion was degraded into a network of trivial and vexatious rules, nine-tenths of which had no relation to moral conduct.

To this narrow and soulless legalism Jesus opposed the spirit of the law. He set man above the Sabbath, and love above ceremonial observances. The Samaritan who showed kindness was dearer to God than the priest and the Levite. The broken cry of the publican was a truer prayer than the boastful utterance of the Pharisee. The kingdom of God is 'within us' (or, 'in the midst of us'), and is to be realized now by the regenerate heart.

But whilst declaring that the spirit was above the letter, and that love was the fulfilment of the law, Jesus and His disciples continued to observe the Jewish ceremonial. 'The earliest Christian Church which gathered at Jerusalem around the twelve were all pious Jews. The certainty that the Messiah had

¹ *The Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 125.

appeared in Jesus of Nazareth, and that though carried away to heaven for a short space He would come again very soon to set up the kingdom of God (Acts iii. 21), only impelled them to redouble their pious zeal and strive after the realization of the Jewish ideal of piety.' ¹ (With the growth of the Church and the conversion of the Gentiles the controversy between Judaism and Christianity became acute and fundamental. The most solemn sign and sacrament of Judaism was circumcision. Were the Gentiles who received Christ bound to be circumcised, and observe the Jewish law? (The position which the controversy holds in St. Paul's epistles shows the strength and importance of the movement. The apostle fought against the danger with all his strength. He saw that, if the Judaizers prevailed, Christianity would shrink into a Jewish sect, that the insistence upon the necessity of the Jewish ceremonial was to overthrow spiritual religion.) So widespread was the evil that even his beloved church of Philippi had not escaped

¹ Dobschutz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*, p. 141.

the leaven. In dealing with these Christian Pharisees the apostle becomes vehement. 'Beware,' he says, 'of the dogs,' of those who are themselves that which they call others, dogs and not children. 'Beware of the circumcision,' of those mutilators of the flesh, who tell you that 'except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved.' 'We are the circumcision,' the true Israelite nation, who have a circumcision not outward but inward, in the spirit and not in the letter.

'It was St. Paul who delivered the Christian Church from Judaism.'¹ How did He do so? The crisis resembled the pre-Reformation period in Europe, when spiritual religion was in danger of being finally crushed by formalism and priestly authority. Like every true reformer, the apostle did not simply pull down, but substituted something better for that which was to be taken away. In opposition to tradition he placed the immediate revelation of Christ to the soul, for blind submission to authority he put the guidance of the Spirit, and for law he substituted love.

¹ Harnack, *What is Christianity*, p. 197.

Let us note these contrasts.

I. The apostle declared for revelation as against tradition. Though he built up a theological system, it was not upon argument that he founded his cause, but upon spiritual experience. Religion had its source not in documents but in the union of his soul with Christ. His theology came to him by revelation and not tradition, through inspiration and not logic. The deductions of the intellect were made subordinate to the intuitions of his heart. He felt that the religion of Jesus was a life rather than a philosophy, and that spiritual realities could not be reduced to a series of propositions. When pressed by his adversaries, he fell back upon that which he had felt and known. The denial of his apostolic authority was met by the declaration that it came as an immediate communication of God to his soul. 'For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it but through revelation of Jesus Christ.' 'When it was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in me, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.'¹ When

¹ Gal. i.

it was suggested that this credential lay between himself and God, and carried no proof for others, he appealed to the fruit of his work, the rich spiritual harvest that had followed his labours. 'The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.'¹ He was at one with his opponents in regarding the Old Testament scriptures as divinely inspired, but he claimed the right to interpret them in the light of his Christian experience, according to the spirit, and not the letter.²

II. Again: The apostle fought against Judaism as the enemy of freedom. It was to be resisted because it treated man as a slave. In matters of belief and conduct it allowed no liberty of choice and no appeal to the individual conscience. Things were to be done simply because they were commanded, and not in response to reason and love. In opposition to this mechanical creed the apostle proclaimed the freedom of the spirit. 'Let each man be fully assured in his own mind.'³ 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'⁴ He

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 2.

² 2 Cor. iii. 6.

³ Rom. xiv. 5.

⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 17.

was not going to throw off the bondage of Moses to accept the yoke of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, though he owed them much for the knowledge which they had imparted to him of Christ.

The only authority he recognized was that of the inner light. 'The spiritual man judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man.'¹ Seer and prophet speak with authority because of their fuller vision of God, and the response which their words awaken in our own souls. Through their more luminous experience our dull faculties are aroused to find God in ourselves, and possess salvation now in the sense of most intimate union with Him. The guidance and impulse are from within: 'Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'²

III. The same principle is applied to the law. It is only as a spiritual reality that the apostle can endure the thought of law. 'It is written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh.'³ The true

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 15.

² Gal. v. 16.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 3.

law is 'the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.'¹ It is fulfilled in one word: love.²

The principal reason of St. Paul's vehement dislike to the Jewish law was that it destroyed the spiritual relation between God and man. Instead of the loving communion of father and child, religion became a commercial transaction. Man was a hireling and God was a master. 'Brethren, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.'³ Even had it been possible to keep the whole law he could have found no rest or satisfaction in it. Man lives by trust and love, and not by legal enactments.

In declaring that we are justified by faith and grace the apostle was uttering a truth, not of theology only, but of all experience. Bargaining and calculation can never go to

¹ Rom. viii. 2.

² Gal. v. 14.

³ Rom. viii. 14-16.

the roots of life. We are saved only by love. It is not the gift that inspires us, but the spirit of the giver ; not the boon, but the grace with which it is bestowed. It is always grace and faith that enkindle the heart. The appeal to law kills what is best in life, and separates friends, but never brings hearts together. Home does not rest upon a code of rules, but upon trust and affection. A true marriage finds its joy and sanctity not in the legal form, but in the sentiments of the soul. And as love is the only true relationship of moral beings to one another, so it is the only true relationship of men to God. Nothing must come between. No law, nor works, nor priests, nor intermediaries of any kind must stand between us and God. It is the dearest privilege of the child to come face to face with the Father. And in the uplifting sense of the Father's love, obedience becomes a joy, and service is perfect freedom. Accordingly in the text the apostle exclaims : ' We offer service by the Spirit of God.' Our worship is not a repetition of outward ceremonies, but is the loving response of the soul to God.

It is a mistake to suppose that the evil against which St. Paul fought so earnestly belonged only to the past. Pharisaism is a growth that is peculiar to no age or country. Its roots are in human nature, and it thrives in every religious soil. It is the vice against which the soul must wage perpetual conflict.

86 The essence of pharisaism consists in externalizing religion, in worshipping the letter rather than the spirit.

Like all life, religion must manifest itself through definite forms. Church ordinances and beliefs must be revered and cherished for the sake of the truth that they convey. 'The only right of rebellion is the right to seek a higher law.' The spiritual man regards these things as temporary aids, and strives after the eternal truth that is underlying them. His creed he holds as a symbol, according to the language of the early Church, the sign rather than the reality. He feels that the experiences of the soul are too transcendent to be completely embodied in any form of words.

But the pharisaic mind clings to outward

forms as sacred in themselves, regards even the recital of a creed as a meritorious act, and insists that the same beliefs shall be accepted by all alike, whether they be found soul-inspiring or not. Thus he offers us stones for bread, and puts machinery in the place of life. And as it is far more easy to obey external rules than to practise truth, justice, and mercy, it often happens that religious energy is transferred from spiritual growth to the lighter task of outward observances. The neglect of weightier matters is atoned for by increased zeal in the things that cost us nothing. Nearness in money matters, doubtful practices in business, pride and injustice and unkindness, are concealed beneath a show of Sabbath-keeping and outward piety, of strictness of belief, and possibly gifts of charity. And when conscience, deceived by the passions, is won over, and no longer makes any protest, the spirit of pharisaism is fully established in our life.

Two marks of this creed are referred to in the context, and by these signs it stands

revealed through every disguise: spiritual pride and uncharitableness. 'As touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless; as touching zeal, persecuting the Church.' The connexion is deep and vital. The self-righteous person is by nature unbrotherly. Sympathy is taught us by our own failures, and in the pursuit of an ideal that is high above us. He who feels keenly his own shortcomings cannot be uncharitable towards others. But the man whose religion consists chiefly in following custom finds an easy road to self-satisfaction. And relieved, as he supposes, from the necessity of self-criticism, he becomes an acute observer of the faults of his neighbours.

Thus self-complacency and censoriousness, spiritual pride and intolerance, go hand in hand. Saul the self-righteous Pharisee showed no mercy to those who differed from him; Paul the apostle of Jesus counsels charity to all. 'Even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself,

lest thou also be tempted.' 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.'¹ He is still a follower of law, but it is 'the law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus.'

¹ Gal. vi. 1, 2.

XIII

KNOWING CHRIST

‘Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ.’—iii. 8.

‘The Greeks thought that man could be saved by knowledge of himself and the world. But deliverance has come through the knowledge of a person, boundless love to the Son of God.’—MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 95.

XIII

KNOWING CHRIST

ST. PAUL's religion was summed up in knowing Christ. It was not knowing an influence, or a system of truth, but a person. How was that knowledge attained? This is a question of deep practical concern. If we can learn the secret of the apostle's experience we shall be on the way to attaining it for ourselves.

St. Paul had never seen Jesus during His lifetime, and yet he knew Him as well as any of the apostles who had lived with Him for months. As Professor Wernle says, ' St. Paul does not know the human Jesus of the Gospels. He only saw the heavenly Jesus, and that for a moment. But facts prove that St. Paul knew Jesus in spite of all, yes, knew Him better than all His predecessors. What he brought to the Greeks was no mere product of

his imagination, but the real Jesus, with His promise, His claims, and His redemption. When St. Paul writes, "He that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of His," and "He that is in Christ Jesus is a new creation," he is filled with a profound and genuine impression of the person of Christ.¹ This knowledge was the most certain fact of life. It inspired him for his labours, and gave him joy amidst his suffering. For the sake of gaining it he had consented to the loss of all things, and now only lived that he might commune with his Saviour and serve Him.

In order to know a person, two things are necessary—revelation and response. All human friendship and love rest upon these dual facts. Revelation is the basis of personal knowledge. However much we may desire to know a person, if he does not wish to know us there is a solitude between us. Though we may meet every day in the year, and talk over things of common interest, yet if there is no personal revelation there is no knowledge. Unless he choose to withdraw the veil and

¹ *Beginnings of Christianity*, p. 267.

manifest himself, his real being is shrouded in obscurity. For us there is no secret of the heart, no fellowship of the spirit, nor vivifying contact of soul with soul. Christ also must reveal Himself, or remain to us unknown.

On the other hand, the power to impart oneself depends upon a sympathetic response. There must be a certain condition of the soul that the revelation may be possible. Light falling upon the hand makes no impression, but when it meets the sensitive retina it discloses a world of truth and beauty. Love cannot enter our life unwelcomed. Jesus said, 'I will manifest Myself to him that loves Me.'¹ Even He could not reveal Himself to a heart that gave no response. Deep must answer unto deep. Now the most certain fact concerning God is that He desires to reveal Himself. His nature is love, and love cannot abide in solitude; it longs to communicate itself. It would seem as if all God's dealings with individual souls and with the human race were directed to this end, that He might prepare those to whom He could impart Himself.

¹ John xiv. 21.

Can we discover in St. Paul's experience any process leading up to the revelation? The vision comes with overwhelming suddenness, and appears to stand in no relation to anything that had gone before. But all experience teaches us to look for hidden causes. Events which seem sudden and abrupt are the outcome of a long process. The ripe fruit falls to the ground, but the summer suns have been acting upon it for months. The outburst of the volcano is the result of forces that have been long and silently gathering to a head. And the crisis in St. Paul's life was preceded by much spiritual stress and conflict. The fact of the Saviour's appearance to him is in itself an evidence of this. A spiritual presence cannot become manifest by mere physical signs. All the recorded appearances of Jesus after His resurrection were to those who were inwardly prepared. St. Paul does not suggest that the manner of Christ's appearance to him was peculiar and exceptional. He classes his own experience with that of hundreds of others. 'He appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then He appeared to above five hundred

brethren at once ; . . . then He appeared to James ; then to all the apostles ; and last of all, as unto one born out of due time, He appeared to me also ' (1 Cor. xv. 5-8).

The words which Jesus addressed to him reveal a violent conflict in Saul's heart. ' It is hard for thee to kick against the goads.' The goads were the stings of his own conscience, and the constraint of his Saviour urging him along a path that he was unwilling to take. It shows that in spite of his furious zeal he had no satisfaction in his religion. The frantic energy with which he persecuted the Christians may itself be a sign that his faith in the old system was beginning to falter.¹ An earnest and impassioned soul like his must often have felt weary with a hollow formalism, and pined for contact with spiritual reality. Though he could boast of being blameless concerning the righteousness of the law, yet it had given him no inward peace, no victory over pride and passion nor deliverance from the law that warred in his members. There came no answer to his cry of anguish and distress, ' O

¹ Pfleiderer, *The Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 38-40.

wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death ?' ¹

It could not escape his notice that those simple fishermen and ignorant publicans whom he persecuted had found the grand secret of life. Their faith in Jesus brought them peace and comfort, and enabled them to suffer gladly for His sake. Could it be a falsehood that breathed into them a spirit of humility and love, and that shed a heavenly radiance upon the dying face of Stephen ? Such thoughts could not fail to impress a sensitive nature like his, and produce deep searchings of heart.

But was he prepared to face the consequences to which these reflections might lead ? Would it not be safer to repress his misgivings at the outset and turn away his mind from dangerous questions ? Let him fall back upon the authority of centuries, and the customs and beliefs of his age. It is thus that men get rid of their scruples, and quench the light of heaven. The Divine Spirit is moving within them, and is calling them, as He called St. Paul before his conversion ; but they refuse

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

to listen to that which disturbs their ease, or to give weight to thoughts that might ripen into convictions, and involve them in loss and suffering. But Saul of Tarsus was an intensely earnest and sincere man, who tried to do God's will as he understood it. His better nature was at war with his false creed, and he allowed that better nature to prevail. And because he strove to be faithful to the truth which he knew, God led him into higher truth, and through terrible spiritual struggles revealed His Son in him.

This is the first and paramount condition of knowing Christ: to be true to Christ's Spirit in our hearts, and to listen to His voice when it speaks in our conscience. The instincts of the soul are from Him, and direct us to Him. Had Saul paltered with his conscience, or tried to quench the inner light, he would never have seen the light that is beyond the brightness of the sun.

The Saviour appeared to him during an interval of quiet and meditation. The revelation does not come to men in the crowded streets, or amidst the roar of business and

pleasure. The heavenly vision appeared to Moses in the solitude of Horeb, to Elijah in the wilderness, and to Saul of Tarsus on the lonely journey to Damascus. Only when the mind is withdrawn from the distractions of outward things can one soul communicate itself to another. When your friend wishes to come near to your inmost life, and impart his deeper thoughts, he does not visit you amidst the agitations of the city, but in some quiet hour of inward response. And it is during periods of meditation and prayer, and in the sacred hush of the soul, that the Saviour speaks, and manifests Himself as He does not unto the world.

To most of us at some time in our life the vision has appeared. Perhaps in loneliness, or sickness or bereavement. If it has not come in overwhelming power and splendour, yet we were conscious of a call, and saw a light that was not of this world. That hour of illumination is remembered still as the most exalted experience of our life, when the shadows fled, and the soul gazed upon the inmost truth of things. But the vision did not tarry : the

heavenly light vanished, and we sometimes ask mournfully—

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?

But in St. Paul's experience the vision remained the master-light of all his seeing. And the reason is stated: 'I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.'¹ He recognized that Christ called him not to ease and contemplation, but to service and suffering; that it was the burden of His own cross that He was laying upon him. We are too prone to think of religion as the satisfaction of an aesthetic taste, or as that which will confirm us in our security and comfort. Jesus says, 'I will show him how much he must suffer for My name.'

Was Saul of Tarsus equal to the tremendous sacrifice? During the three days of blindness and distress in the house of Judas of Damascus, opportunity was given him to ponder the

¹ Acts xxvi. 19.

momentous question. Still distrustful of his new enthusiasm, he withdrew to the desert,¹ and during three years he proved and strengthened his soul in silent communing with himself and God. Finally his decision was fixed, and he resolved to follow Christ at the cost of ease and comfort and reputation and friends, and of all that he had once held dear. It was a fearful wrench, and involved the tearing up by the roots of the most cherished objects of desire. But when he came to know Christ, and to realize what he had received, his estimate of things was so changed that he looked upon his old gains as worthless refuse.

Let us not miss the important truth that the knowledge of Jesus can only come through suffering and loss. There is not one road for the apostle and another for us. The way of the cross is for all. Outward happenings may bring to a head experiences that have been slowly and unconsciously ripening. But no miracle or external event can reveal to us a

¹ It is a mistake to suppose that in Gal. i. 18 he speaks of having spent three years in Arabia. (Weizsäcker, *Apostolic Age*, vol. i. p. 95.)

truth for which we are not already prepared. And the preparation usually involves a process of strenuous and painful effort. Earnestness, deep and intense, is above all things the condition of knowing Christ.

The most fatal cause of spiritual blindness is indifference, the easy-going apathy which can be disturbed by nothing but personal interests, and which no high aim ever kindles into enthusiasm. We behold the vision when we are striving to be faithful to our noblest intuitions, and longing after the things that Christ is able to be to us.

Yet there are many who hope to know Christ while living a purely formal and self-satisfied life. There is nothing that they are willing to part with for Christ; not one sacrifice that they are ready to make for the sake of knowing Him. Perhaps there is some particular sin that is spoiling their life, and, like a fleck of cloud across the sun, is hiding God's face from their view. But they cannot be brought to give it up, and thereby they shut themselves out from the chief joy of life.

It is useless to speculate concerning the

manner of the revelation to St. Paul, whether it came directly to the soul, or through the medium of the bodily senses. That which produces spiritual certainty is the evidence of the soul. Our physical faculties may play us false, and under conditions which are known to science, all kinds of illusions may be started in the mind. The value of every experience must be ascertained by its fruit. And judged by this test, no fact stands more firmly established than that Jesus Christ in that supreme moment revealed Himself to the soul of His servant.

XIV

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

‘That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death ; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect : but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended : but one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’—iii. 10–14.

XIV

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

WE learn from these words how completely St. Paul had broken away from his old creed. Almost every sentence is a correction of his former views. In his pharisaic days the thought of a suffering Messiah was abhorrent to him. His hope, like that of his nation, was centred in one who should triumph by worldly means, and crush opposition by force. But now he has made the great discovery that suffering is the true path of Messiahship, the path which has been owned of God, and which must be trodden by all who would be followers of Christ. He desires to know Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings.

At one time he had hoped to earn a glorified resurrection through ceremonial strictness of

life. He has since learned that this is the result of spiritual effort, and he longs to experience the quickening power of the risen Saviour. Formerly his life was ruled by the traditions and commandments of men. Now he is led of the Spirit, Christ has grasped him, the compulsion is from within. His old creed fostered the spirit of self-complacency and taught him to believe that he had almost attained perfection. But Jesus has shown him the grandeur of the spiritual life and its immeasurable possibilities of progress. In the presence of this unapproachable ideal all thoughts of past attainments are cast behind, and every nerve is strained in reaching out after that which is beyond.

It is this part of St. Paul's experience—his striving after progress—which brings him into closest sympathy with the soul of man in every age. In some features of his spiritual life and thought we may or may not share. There may be nothing sudden or startling in the manner of Christ's appearance to us. He may call us as He called Matthew, who rose up quietly and followed Him. He may

declare that salvation has come to us, as in the case of Zacchaeus, upon our determining to give up unrighteous ways. Or perhaps, like Timothy, we may grow up to be Christians from our infancy. We may be conscious of no violent contrasts of feeling, and, unlike the apostle, perceive no wide chasm separating our past life from the present. But we must all resemble St. Paul in taking upon ourselves the burden of spiritual growth. We must be like him in dissatisfaction with our present attainments, and in ceaseless striving after a nobler and more Christlike life. Effort and aspiration are the marks by which a living soul may be known. The growth and expansion of his spiritual nature is the first and last duty of man.

St. Paul kept this aim constantly in view, and amidst his incessant labours for Christ never suffered it to fall into the background. He was an old man when he wrote this epistle, but in the spiritual life there is no decrepitude, for there is no abandonment of effort. Though his work on earth was nearly over, he was still pressing forward. Death

does not exist for the soul that is striving. Each fresh advance in the spiritual life revealed more clearly the splendour of the heavenly calling, and led him to labour more earnestly for its realization.

What, then, was the goal of all St. Paul's efforts and strivings? It was that he might 'attain unto the resurrection from the dead.' That which fired his thoughts and roused him to incessant exertions was the hope of rising into a new and glorified life with Christ. Like every earnest man contending with evil, he often felt weary with the continual struggle, and looked forward to a time when the soul would realize its aspirations without pain and effort. The intensity of his language indicates how keenly he felt the difficulty. 'If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.' He speaks of himself as straining to the uttermost to reach the goal. Christ, he says, had grasped him and was urging him forward, but there were forces within holding him back. Elsewhere he tells us how he buffeted his body and kept it under, lest, having preached to others, he himself should

be a castaway.¹ If a man like St. Paul found it necessary to labour so hard, what ought to be our experience? Is not the ease and satisfaction of our life a sign that we are offering no resistance, and are allowing the lower nature to have its way at the expense of the spirit?

The attainment of the resurrection is connected with the knowledge of Christ: 'That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death, if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.' How are these two facts related?

It would be difficult to answer this question if we adopted the view that the resurrection glory is an arbitrary reward attached to our faith; that it is a state to be bestowed upon us by a kind of miracle after death. St. Paul conceived of the resurrection life as the natural outgrowth of our present character, the gradual unfolding of the Christ-life that is in us. By virtue of our spiritual union with Jesus the same seed of immortal life is in us as in Him,

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

and we cannot be holden of death any more than He. 'For if we have become united with Him by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His resurrection.'¹ Just as the tiny seed hidden in the earth pushes its way through the dark clods, till at the coming of the spring its loveliness is revealed, so the perfect beauty of the soul, growing and expanding through suffering and struggle, will shine forth at the resurrection.

But how is the development of the soul assisted and advanced through seeking a more perfect knowledge of Jesus?

We can only grow in knowledge of a person by growing like him. This is the principle which underlies all human relationships. We come to know one another only as we share the same thoughts and experience. Imagine two persons brought into association: the one of lofty and earnest soul, whose whole nature responded intensely to all that was true and beautiful in life; the other possessing a shallow and commonplace mind, caring only for money and the pleasures that money can bring. How

¹ Rom. vi. 5.

are these two persons to be brought to know each other? They may talk together, but words convey no meaning unless there is a state of feeling which answers to them. The condition of any true knowledge of each other is that they should meet upon the same plane. The lower man must rise upwards. He must begin to fit himself for the society which he wishes to enter by caring for the things of the Spirit, and cultivating his higher instincts. And as his soul grows, he will find himself drawing nearer to the friendship of the noble and the good, and the energy of the higher nature quickening his own.

In the life of the Spirit we move in the society for which we are prepared. Influence and privilege count for nothing. The expansion and development of our own soul is the price to be paid for the possession of any lofty friendship. It was through spiritual growth that St. Paul sought the fuller knowledge of Jesus. He resisted the temptation to live upon the memory of his first great experience. It would have been easier to keep repeating that he had seen the Lord than to make fresh

effort and discovery. But to cease to strive and aspire is to lose that which is gained. The student who lives upon his past successes soon drops to a commonplace level, and forfeits both intelligence and insight. The apostle, in pursuing his heavenly calling, felt that his duty lay not with the past but with the present and the future; and forgetting the things which were behind, he reached forth to the things which were before.

We might have expected that the apostle, in his desire to know Jesus, would have shown anxiety to gather up all the details of the Saviour's life and teaching; that he would have eagerly questioned the older apostles, Peter, James and John, with a view to learning all that they could recollect of the Master's sayings and doings. But information about Jesus, though instructive and inspiring, was held to be less important than the immediate revelation of Christ in his soul. 'I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me.'¹ To place tradition above the experience

¹ Gal. i. 16, 17.

of the soul was to return to the bondage from which Christ had set him free ; it was to repeat the error of those who, ' having begun in the spirit, sought to be perfected in the flesh.' This was the fundamental fallacy of the creed which St. Paul had renounced, which affirmed that all necessary knowledge of God could be conveyed through documents.

The apostle's experience sums up for us the great facts of the spiritual life. There is first the awakening of the soul through contact with a higher power. Something there must be to stir into activity our slumbering faculties. As the influence of great minds quickens our intelligence, so the energy of the risen Christ kindles our souls into hope and love. To feel 'the power of the resurrection' is to be conscious of the rising up within us of a new spiritual life. This is the starting-point of progress, when we discern that our life, which we thought trivial, may become infinitely grand and noble. And when we are earnestly seeking to attain the divine blessing assists all our efforts. If, says the apostle, progress is your constant aim ; if the desire to

grow better is the supreme purpose that controls your life, though there may be faults of feeling and errors of understanding, God will correct these and lead you into clearer light.

Life is indeed poor and mean unless we are constantly growing wiser and better. 'There is nothing,' says Seneca, 'more disgraceful than that an old man should have nothing to produce as a proof that he has lived long except his years.' It is the striving after the perfected state that gives worth and dignity to human existence. It is not the great sinner that is lost, but the righteous person who is making no effort to improve. The poet Browning was never tired of teaching that it is aspiration which makes the man; that our true position is determined by the intensity of our soul-strivings; that it is better to aim high and fail, than to aim low and succeed. The development of the souls of men, he said, is 'the only thing worth studying.'

Surprise is sometimes felt that one so holy and devoted as St. Paul should have to confess at the end of life that he had not attained.

But there is nothing remarkable in this. The consciousness of imperfection is always an accompaniment of greatness. No person who is growing can ever be satisfied with his work or his attainments. The better his work and the higher his attainments, the less he is inclined to rest in them ; and the reason is plain. All good work is the result of the honest and diligent use of our faculties, and this brings with it clearer perception and increased capacity ; as the quality of his work improves he improves with it. It is when we have done our best that we are least satisfied, because the faithful exercise of our powers has enlarged our intelligence and improved our skill. And in the spiritual life there is the same sense of incompleteness. Every act of love increases our capacity for loving ; every temptation conquered brings a new consciousness of power ; every ideal that is striven after opens a fresh vista of possible achievement. The spiritually-minded person can never rest in his attainments, for as he grows his life becomes deeper, his vision clearer, and his ideals higher.

The apostle reminds us that attainment is

only possible through suffering. The Cross is the symbol of the hardships that must be endured. Ultimately all our temptations may be resolved into one, the temptation not to struggle ; to give in ; to follow the line of least resistance ; to yield to the desire for ease and self-satisfaction. And this tendency is strongest when we lose hope, and cease to have faith in God and the possibilities of our own nature. To possess a supreme faith in man's future is the inspiration of all high endeavour. It was Jesus who made the highest demands upon our humanity. He said that we were to be perfect as our Father in heaven. And St. Paul does but repeat the teaching of his Master when he speaks of the perfected life as our divinely appointed goal ; it is the mode of being which God meant us to attain ; it is that for which we are apprehended by Christ, the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The hope of ultimate attainment always looks to a life beyond the grave. Even those who have lived most earnestly feel that they have accomplished little. The longing for

progress grows stronger as the end draws nearer. The desire is often expressed that we could begin life again with our present knowledge and experience. We are dimly conscious of faculties and powers which unite us to God, and that are capable of infinite growth and expansion; but the time is short. We gain our knowledge slowly and painfully, and it seems as if we were only beginning to learn when the school closes.

These facts have appeared to many of the greatest thinkers to be the strongest argument for a life after death. Kant affirmed immortality on the ground that the moral law demanded infinite progress in man, and that that was only possible in an endless life. Goethe said, 'I have no doubt as to our continued existence, for nature cannot forgo her actuality.'¹ Nature is not drifting aimlessly; she is guided by a purpose, and is moving towards some goal; and as man is the crown of creation, he must be included in her progress.

Step by step since time began
We see the steady gain of man

¹ Bishop Welldon, *The Hope of Immortality*, p. 231.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be ;
but we know that nothing of worth that we
put into life, or gain from it, will ever be lost.

‘I shall arrive ! What time, what circuit first,
I ask not ; but unless God send His hail
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet or stifling snow,
In sometime, His good time, I shall arrive ;
He guides me and the bird. In His good time.’¹

¹ Browning, *Paracelsus*.

XV

THE BODY THAT SHALL BE

‘For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself.’—iii. 18–21.

XV

THE BODY THAT SHALL BE

ACCORDING to this passage it is not only our souls but also our future bodies that will be determined by the kind of life that is lived here. If our mind is set on earthly things, we shall possess hereafter a body in correspondence with these gross affections. But if we strive upwards and seek the things of Christ, His Spirit working in us will change our present body that it may be conformed to the body of His glory.

The apostle's language might suggest that the transformation was to be accomplished suddenly, by a miracle at some future time. But the general spirit of his teaching represents the change as a vital process which has already begun. Its growth is in harmony with

God's law of orderly development. The influences that form the future body are in operation at the present moment. This is plainly the meaning of St. Paul's words: 'If the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you.'¹

A belief in the continuance of life after death is common to all ages, and is found in every part of the world. The distinctive feature of the Christian religion is its insistence upon the union of soul and body. It is to be a survival of our complete human nature, with all its faculties, affections, and interests.

The Greeks and Romans thought of the other life as a shadowy existence. It was a going down into an underground region, or Hades, where the ghosts of the departed wandered about aimlessly and hopelessly. It was a life so devoid of joyousness and interest that Homer makes Achilles say that he would rather serve as a hireling upon earth than be

¹ Rom. viii. 11.

a king among the dead. A similar belief existed among the Hebrews during the greater part of their history. Sheol, like the Greek Hades, was an underground world, where the spirits of the dead were gathered, good and evil alike. The departed were only the phantoms of their former selves. 'Their love, as their hatred and their envy, is now perished, neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.' . . . 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in Sheol, whither thou goest.'¹ By the time of Christ a belief in the resurrection was general, but it was regarded merely as the restoration of the present body. Only the few had attained to a higher conception.

St. Paul's teaching is emphatic upon two points:

I. In the future life we shall not be naked souls. He shrinks from the thought of our being left without a body, and wandering about in a homeless and discarnate state.

¹ Eccles. ix. 6 and 10.

‘For, indeed, we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.’¹ Some kind of body is necessary to our personal identity. An unembodied and formless existence would probably mean that we should cease to be distinct and separate beings, and be merged in the infinite. If we are to be able hereafter to communicate with the universe and manifest ourselves to others, the soul must act through some vehicle which will fulfil in the higher world the same function that our bodies serve here.

It was a true instinct, then, which led Christian thought to cling so tenaciously to belief in the resurrection of the body. But this has often been taken to mean a literal resurrection in the flesh. Of such teaching there is no trace in the New Testament. The Bible does not even speak of the resurrection of the body. When we use the phrase the reference is to the spiritual body. The scrip-

¹ 2 Cor. v. 4.

tural expressions are, 'the resurrection of the dead,' or 'the resurrection from the dead.'

II. The second feature in St. Paul's doctrine is the statement that we shall be clothed in a higher body than the one we possess here. 'Thou sowest not the body which shall be.' 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' 'It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.'¹ Yet there is a sense in which it is the same body. The soul that fashions it is the same. Our identity is not in the outward form, but in the inner life that manifests itself through matter. There is no fixity or permanence in the body. The elements that compose it are in a state of constant change, and are being discarded or renewed every moment. They have already formed part of the life of plants and animals, and will again be absorbed by other organisms. In the course of a long life the same person has inhabited many bodies; it cannot therefore be a matter of supreme importance which body he happened to occupy at the time of death.

¹ 1 Cor. xv.

To speak of committing our loved ones to the grave is the language of materialism. Socrates remarked this when his friends were talking to him about his funeral: 'Yes, you may bury me, if you can catch me.' The true self, that which rises again, is never buried. To the good man death is resurrection: it is escape from the lower condition into the higher. And, following the universal law of development, when the higher is reached the lower is cast aside as an encumbrance. The bird that sings in the air does not resume the shell that was once its prison-house, nor does the butterfly return to the form that it discarded as a caterpillar. And when man's physical body has done its work it also will be cast aside and a higher organization will be unfolded from within.

As when one layeth
His worn-out robes away,
And, taking new ones, sayeth,
'These will I wear to-day';
So putteth by the spirit
Lightly its garb of flesh,
And passeth to inherit
A residence afresh.¹

¹ Sir Edwin Arnold's translation of *Bhagavadgita*.

The apostle says 'every seed has its own body.' The countless forms that we see around us are built up out of a few simple elements. Why should the same chemical substance become in one case a thistle, and in the other a rose, or the acorn always evolve into an oak and never into a beech? No physical tests can discover the secret. All that can be said is that in every seed there is an invisible energy, a mystery of life which fashions the outer elements according to its own nature.

The same law may be observed in human life. The environment of a spirit is generally in accordance with the state of its thought and affection. The mind is ever tending to assimilate its surroundings to its own character. If there is a love of what is pure, beautiful, and true, such will be the nature of the environment, and where thought is impure and coarse this will be expressed in the outward condition. Two homes may be parted only by a single wall, yet the one shall be the abode of beauty and order, the other of squalor and chaos.

The soul is the creative and determining

force which is gradually subduing all things to itself. The dominating power of the spirit in man is becoming more and more recognized by the foremost thinkers of our age. The trend of thought is moving away from the crude materialism of the past generation. More than thirty years ago Professor Tyndall, when president of the British Association, stated that he saw in matter the potency and promise of all terrestrial life. In 1898, Sir William Crookes, speaking from the same high position, referred to these words, and said that he would venture exactly to transpose them and to say: 'In life I see the promise and potency of all forms of matter.' The flesh is visibly changed and moulded by the indwelling spirit. Mental states write themselves plainly upon the countenance. Base thoughts degrade the body, a pure mind refines and spiritualizes it.

When, therefore, it is said that Christ will change the body of our humiliation, the reference is not simply to some future event. It speaks of that which is in operation at the present moment, through the quickening

energy of the indwelling spirit. Why should this mighty force be belittled? Is it not a fact of actual experience that when the power of Christ is received and realized it transforms both the soul and its environment. The spiritually-minded man has already risen with Christ. 'If, then, ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is.'¹ Such a person is living in his spiritual body now. Every moment this finer organization is being built up from within by thoughts, motives, and desires. At times it shines through the veil of flesh. It becomes radiant in the face of the patient sufferer, and in the rapt devotion of the saint. In hours of self-forgetfulness and adoring love the spiritual body pervades the material with a visible glow. The body of Jesus resembled ours, yet at times it shone with a splendour which caused those who saw it to shade their eyes. The face of Moses glowed after he had communed with God. These examples teach us that there is no necessary barrier between matter and spirit, and that when the soul is

¹ Col. iii. 1.

ennobled the body will express the inward glorification. This was the eternal truth typified in the transfiguration.¹

The actual nature of the future body cannot be declared. It transcends our present thought and experience. What it is can only be expressed in contrast with our present state. The physical body is referred to by the apostle as one of humiliation. He does not speak of it with contempt, for it is appropriate to our present existence and a necessary stage in our onward progress. Yet it often seems more of a hindrance than a help. It is subject to weakness and disease, decay and death. We feel ourselves to be capable of higher things and are thwarted by the body. 'To will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not.'

The future body, says the apostle, will be a spiritual one. The spirit is the highest part of our nature, and connects us with God and eternity. The present body is related to the earth, and is largely ruled by our lower in-

¹ Sir Oliver Lodge, *Hibbert Journal*, January 1906.

telligence and animal impulses. It is a natural or 'psychical' body.¹ For this reason earthly things appear more real than God and the soul.² Hereafter this will be reversed. In the future body the spirit will be supreme.

The transformation is to be accomplished by discipline and subjugation.

The power of Christ 'to subdue' is the emphatic note of the passage. We rise upwards only through the subjection of the lower to the higher. When bodily passions rule us we live in the animal state; under the sway of reason we become men, and when the 'natural' man is dominated by purity and love we are made partakers of the divine nature. Such persons are living in the spiritual body now, and are developing, unknown to themselves, faculties and powers which will hereafter respond to every impulse of the soul, and open to them the wealth and fullness of existence. Their destiny is contrasted with the fate of those who live only in the physical body, who 'mind earthly things.' Their end, says the apostle, is destruction.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 44.

² 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Not the extinction of being, but the loss of all that makes life worth living; the death of all high ideas, of noble feelings, and generous thoughts.

In the eyes of Jesus there was nothing so destructive of the soul as devotion to material things. The actual and open sins of the masses were a less obstacle to eternal life than the comfortable worldliness of the respectable church member. That which seemed to fill Jesus with despair was the state of mind that was without aspiration, which found satisfaction for all its desires in the sensuous world, and said, 'Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.' It is not the intellectual doubter, but the groveling, sordid person who strikes at the heart of religion. 'The enemies of the Cross,' says the apostle, are those 'who mind earthly things.'

And as they sow they reap. The earthly-minded man is forming the body that shall be. His mundane thoughts are attracting from without, and building up from within, an environment of grosser materials. The coarser embodiment will at last become his prison-

house. We see the operation of this law now. The characteristic of the earthly mind is the narrowness of its outlook, the poverty of its sympathies. The desolation will be complete when the soul can no longer respond to the love, and beauty, and harmony that are around it. To be without the spiritual body would mean that we should receive no life from the spiritual universe, and should be incapable of communion with lofty souls or fellowship with God.

XVI
UNITY

‘ I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord.’—iv. 2.

XVI

UNITY

UNITY is the keynote of this epistle, and it is enforced by many considerations. In the present passage the appeal is made to our common Christian experience, our one life in God. In another epistle, written about the same time, St. Paul pleads for unity, on the ground that there is 'one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.'¹ The mind of the apostle was continually reaching after the widest possible conception of unity. In writing to the Romans he speaks of all nature as sharing in the condition of man. The whole creation, animate and inanimate, is waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption.²

Nothing in religion has tended more to

¹ Eph. iv. 6.

² Rom viii. 20-22.

foster disunion than small and localized views of God. What tribal feuds and race antagonisms have grown up and flourished under the notion of a national deity ! What estrangements and antipathies have been kept alive by the belief that God was interested in our sects and systems, and would take sides in our quarrels ! How rashly and profanely has His great name been brought into our petty controversies ! Larger thoughts of God would show us that unity is the fundamental law of the universe. As there is one divine life moving in the soul of man, and in all created things, to be out of harmony with our fellow men is to be in conflict with the eternal order.

The conception of the unity of all life, of 'the ultimate fellowship of created things,' has received wonderful enlargement and illumination from recent knowledge of the universe. Modern thought is helping religion by breaking down barriers of separation, by raising us above the tyranny of detail, and bringing into view all things as the movement of one divine mind.

In a striking passage Emerson says : ' The

day of days, the great day of the feast of life, is that in which the inward eye opens to the unity of things.' In childhood the mind is most impressed by the infinite variety of things. The millions of objects which meet the eye appear separate and unconnected. To the mind of a child the shells upon the seashore bear no relation to the limestone hills; the movement of the kettle lid, as the water boils, has no connexion with the earthquake that wrecks a city, and a stone falling to the earth suggests nothing in common with the setting sun.

But the first step in education is towards unity. When a child learns to read he groups letters together which separately mean nothing. Then he adds word to word, and gradually spells out all that the wisest have thought and felt. These very letters may teach the child the oneness of the human race. They are not of yesterday, but belong to a remote past and connect us with the ancient Egyptians. As the boy learns arithmetic he is making use of figures which have been received from the ancient Hindus. Thus even in learning the

three Rs we may be reminded of our oneness with the past.

When our study is extended to the world at large we are more than ever impressed by the underlying unity. The infinite variety is only upon the surface, and gradually disappears as we look more deeply into things. The various sciences run into one another, so that it is impossible to know one thoroughly without understanding many more. The student of physiology must be acquainted with the researches of the chemist. The geologist cannot pursue his inquiries without the assistance of them both, as well as the help of the astronomer. The astronomer depends upon the labours of the mathematician. Indeed, modern science is largely a search for unity. The mind cannot rest in a number of detached and separate facts, but must bring them all under some unifying principle. It is the unconscious search for God. It springs from the conviction that 'there is no dualism, no contradiction, but that all things—from the lowest material object to the highest intelligence, are bound together by an invisible cause.'¹

¹ Principal John Caird, *University Addresses*, p. 6.

The history of each individual connects him with the whole animal creation.

Hold thou, my friend, no lesser life in scorn;
All nature is the womb whence man was born.

Again; the physical basis of all life is the same. The protoplasm of a plant is identical with that of an animal, and at a certain stage of growth it is impossible to say which may become a fungus, and which a man. This substance is composed of a few simple elements. In fact, the whole world—the bodies we dwell in, the air we breathe, the water we drink, and every animal, tree and flower—is almost entirely formed of carbon, and three invisible gases—oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen.

By means of the spectroscope the light which comes from other worlds is examined, and it is discovered that the stars are composed of the same materials as our earth. Every year millions of meteors fall upon the earth and mingle with its soil. As Sir Robert Ball has stated: 'The loaf as it comes upon the table contains within it particles which have voyaged for uncounted thousands of centuries of time through illimitable millions

of miles of space. 'The life of each one of us is in intimate association with particles that have been brought here from other worlds.'

It was long supposed that the invisible atoms were the ultimate subdivisions of matter. It is now held that these are minute centres of electrical force, and thus the barrier between matter and spirit is gradually melting away.

Modern science teaches that all forces are one. Motion is turned into heat, heat into electricity, electricity into light. But everywhere throughout space, in Sirius or the Pole-star, the forces are one, and can neither be increased nor diminished.

Upon the degree of this force depends the infinite variety of things. A bar of iron seems as solid as anything we know, yet its solidity is only in appearance. It is composed of an inconceivable number of atoms that never touch one another, and which are held together by an almost infinitely rapid motion. When the motion is quickened by heat the atoms fall apart as liquid, and if it be still further increased they fly off as vapour. So that

between the bar of iron and the puff of vapour the only difference is the rapidity of motion.

Law and force are everywhere. All the colour, beauty, and music in the world depend upon laws of motion. If the vibrations of the ether are too few or too many we see nothing. Upon the number of vibrations that impinge upon the eye depend all the thousand tints and shades of colour which we distinguish. Every graceful form may be brought under the rules of geometry. Music is waves of sound according to higher laws. The waves may be simple, or infinitely complex, but their motion is governed by mathematical rules. Herschel was a distinguished musician before becoming an eminent astronomer. In pursuing mathematics for the sake of his music, he became able to read the secrets of the heavens. There is law and order throughout the universe; and these are only the manifestations of mind and will.

This brings us to the conclusion of the master-thinkers of the world, that mind is the great reality, and that all nature is living thought. Behind the manifold forms and

boundless variety of things there is the infinite mind, of which matter and force, law and order, truth and love are the expression. 'All comes from one,' said Pythagoras; 'God embraces all, and actuates all, yet is but one.' And in the words of the late Laureate—

One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

And in the language of the apostle: 'One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.'

From the unity of things important conclusions follow. Since all things are one, there can only be one will in the universe. It stands to reason, therefore, that all man's success and happiness must depend upon his being in harmony with the supreme will: in other words, upon his being at one with God. Our most important duty in life is to discover God's will and then to obey it. During the American war of 1861 a person said to Lincoln that he hoped the Lord would be on the side of the North. Lincoln replied, 'About

that I am not at all concerned ; but only that we should be on the side of the Lord.'

Sin, in the New Testament, is called lawlessness. All wrong-doing is a breach of law. It is in conflict with the universe and with God's own nature. Let a man build a house and disregard the laws of gravity, and all the forces of the world will combine to pull it down about his head. Let him shape his conduct according to his own likes and dislikes, and not according to God's will, and his life will be inevitably ruined. Escape is impossible. In a universe of law and order, where God's will and God's action are everywhere, our prosperity can only stand in obedience.

The supreme aim of religion is to put an end to lawlessness, by bringing man into harmony with God. Its highest fulfilment is in complete surrender to the divine will—
'Not My will, but Thine be done.' If the Christian asserts his self-consciousness, it is only that he may merge it in a higher life. 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Jesus came to make atonement, that is to make God and man one ; sin had put them

apart. Peace is oneness with God. Prayer is union with God, response to the divine love, living in the Spirit. Power is simply the capacity to receive ; it is uniting ourselves to God. God's Spirit is in us and around us, and by appropriating that Spirit we become strong with God's strength, and wield a power that is irresistible. 'All things are yours.'

And from the unity of things it follows that he who breaks one law is in a profound sense guilty of all. Natural and spiritual are one. The violation of a bodily law by lust or intemperance exacts its penalty from the mind and soul as well as from the body, and the whole man suffers together. On the other hand, a pure and noble mind imparts health to the body, for to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.

And as all men are bound together by invisible bonds, the influence of every act and thought radiates like energy throughout all space and time, and no man liveth to himself alone. There is a corporate soul in the world in which all lives are enfolded. This is sometimes spoken of as 'the spirit of the age,' or

‘the mind of the age.’ It is around us like an atmosphere. The average person is ruled by it, and the strongest seldom rises far above it. All are helping to create it. Each is adding something to this common medium of our life.

And from this we discover the true source of weakness and discontent, of fret and worry. It is not, as we imagine, in our misfortunes, but in detaching ourselves from the life universal, and living in a narrow and self-centred state. To be much in the company of oneself, with small aims and trivial interests, is the certain way of dwarfing our nature and destroying its freedom and joy. It is impossible to be at peace with ourselves if we are out of harmony with God and His universe. By escaping from ourselves and living in the larger life of mankind we expand our nature and gain strength and dominion.

The brotherhood of man does not rest upon an arbitrary law, but upon an eternal fact. Selfishness separates and love unites, therefore love is the greatest thing in the world. The most profound minds of the world have been

impressed by this pervading unity. Thus Goethe says, 'Only mankind together is the true man, and the individual can only be joyous and happy when he feels himself in the whole.' The philosophers of the East have urged us to cease from self-seeking passions and desires, and to realize our oneness with the soul that is behind all things. Jesus proclaimed the unity of the human race in terms of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. He declared that the unity already existed, and that to live in harmony with it was to live according to our real nature.

Man's most exalted state is that in which he is least conscious of himself, when his life abounds and overflows and mingles with the life of others. Who that has ever felt it can forget the rapture when in some crowded hall the burning words of an orator, or the enthralling power of music, have laid to rest all dividing interests and all discordant thoughts, and thousands of persons have become one soul? At such a time we can only say: 'Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell.' This is a foretaste of heaven,

unity, oneness with God, and oneness with each other. It was the prayer of Jesus: 'That they may all be one ; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us.'¹ No more divisions, no more estrangements, no more separations. All one in Christ. 'Then shall the Son also Himself be subjected unto (the Father), that God may be all in all !'²

¹ John xvii. 21.

² Cor. xv. 28.

XVII

RELIEF FROM CARE

‘In nothing be anxious ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.’—iv. 6.

XVII

RELIEF FROM CARE

At a time when wealth is increasing and knowledge advancing, when science is adding to the comforts of life and discovering fresh remedies for the alleviation of suffering, worry and anxiety are spreading. Mental breakdown is becoming more common, asylums are growing larger, and nervous diseases unknown to our fathers are making their appearance.

It is usual to refer this to the activity and tension of modern life, but undoubtedly the chief cause is care. One of the most eminent physicians in the world, Professor William Osler, referring to the causes of ill-health, recently stated: 'I deny that work, legitimate work, has anything to do with this. It is that foul fiend worry who is responsible for a large

majority of the cases. The more carefully one looks into the causes of nervous breakdown, the less important work is as a factor.' If anxiety could be eliminated, and tasks taken up in a cheerful and confident spirit, it would do more than all else to lighten the burden, and turn work into a source of strength.

Every great teacher has laid stress upon the avoidance of care, not only as that which is troublesome, but as a state which is positively harmful. Whatever is soul-destroying cannot be a necessary fact in human experience. As spiritual development is the end of man's life, and care defeats that end, it must be possible to live above it. This is the first fact to be recognized, and faith in a fact helps to bring about its fulfilment. To believe in the possibility of a state goes more than half-way towards realizing it. Care is useless, it is harmful, therefore it can and ought to be got rid of. A mind that strongly affirms this fact is on the road to victory.

The next step is to ascertain the source of care. To find a remedy it is necessary to understand the disease. Does it arise from our

circumstances, or from our mental condition ? Is the shadow cast by the outward state, or by our inner attitude ?

The common notion is that all troubles have their origin in our circumstances, that it is the position in which we are placed that is at fault, and not ourselves. To mend the outward lot becomes, therefore, the only concern. It is thought that larger incomes, more leisure, altered surroundings would give immunity from care. But the facts of life are against this theory. Experience shows that those who possess these things are no freer from worry than other people. Enlarged circumstances bring new desires, and the goal recedes as we advance. If some troubles disappear, others take their place. Surprise is often felt by the prosperous that wealth has done so little for them. It seems to have left them more exposed to the assaults of misfortune, and less able to bear the shock. On the other hand, one is constantly meeting with those whose outward lot is sufficiently hard, to whom the eking out of the weekly income is a matter of thoughtful calculation ; yet they live a cheer-

ful and contented life, too intent on the duties of the present to waste their thought upon the possible troubles of the future. Such examples prove that the source of care is more within ourselves than in our circumstances, and that the remedy must be sought in adopting a right attitude towards the facts of life.

A safe rule is to refrain from dwelling upon unpleasant things. If there are trying facts, there is no need to make them conspicuous. In our thoughts, as in our homes and cities, we should give prominence to that which is most agreeable, and keep out of sight what is ugly and unpleasant. This is not to play false with the facts of life, but to give them their proper place. To dwell upon a suffering is to exaggerate it. It is like some trifling grievance which grows by being turned over and talked about. The imaginary trouble is always greater than the actual one. Nine-tenths of the cares of life are nothing but the creation of our own fancy. The time of worry is in vacant hours, hence the necessity of an occupied life. In the wise words of Carlyle,

‘Our duty is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.’ The busy man is never the care-ridden man. As the Spanish proverb says: ‘The dog that is hunting does not feel the insects.’ Anxiety and worry are the penalty of a small and self-contained life swayed by personal ends. Escape from care may be found in the cultivation of larger sympathies and a more generous interest in others.

Again, it is not wise to expect life on too easy terms. The world is no playground, but a school, where trial and discipline are the price of our education. The sooner the lesson is learnt the earlier will come our release.

It is easier to adjust the mind to that which is felt to be inevitable, and as a certain amount of trouble is the law of life, we must learn to take things as they come. The man of business knows that, do what he may, untoward circumstances will arise, that all his forethought and calculation must sometimes leave him in the lurch. But he does not waste his time in useless apprehension and worry. He knows that to be in business at all means occasional

disappointment, and having done his best, he accepts facts as they are. In some such way we must adjust ourselves to life.

Trials that are met with dignity and fortitude strengthen and ennoble us. The injury comes from cowardice and complaining. But trouble may be borne in a higher spirit than that of the Stoic, it may be met in the spirit of trust. The deepest peace comes to the man who, having done his best, commits himself to the will of God, believing that the divine power will take care of him better than he can take care of himself.

It was in this spirit that St. Paul triumphed over care. His life was an example of inward serenity amidst outward troubles. A lonely prisoner, chained to a soldier, uncertain whether the prison door would open on life or death, his mind was at perfect peace. 'I know how to be abased, I know also how to abound.'¹ 'When I am suffering hardships in a low estate I take it cheerfully; and when I am in easy, pleasant circumstances I am not elated, or turned aside from my labours.'

¹ iv. 12.

What was the secret of his happiness? First and foremost, he had perfect trust in God. There is needed more than faith in ourselves to make us brave and calm amidst life's troubles and turmoils. There must be faith in One beyond ourselves, who is ordering all things in wisdom and goodness. Be anxious for nothing, pray about everything. Whatever causes you anxiety—business, health, family, the needs of the body or the wants of the soul—speak to God about it. We pour forth our complaints to our fellow men, let us rather tell them to the Father in secret. Are not the troubles and anxieties of life the means by which He is seeking to draw us to Himself? As a Father He desires to commune with His children and impart to them His own Spirit. But in unbroken prosperity we forget our dependence. It was when the prodigal 'began to be in want' that he said, 'My father has bread enough and to spare.' It is in 'the time of need' that we come boldly to the throne of grace.

And coming to God means that He is able to help us. 'In everything make known your

requests.' Prayer is not only communion or contemplation, but asking for definite blessings, in the belief that they will be granted if God sees them to be good for us.

We live by helping one another ; strange if God were the only being who could do nothing for us. When on earth, Jesus exerted divine power to relieve want and cure disease. Why not now ? Matter is moulded by mind ; and as the Divine Spirit is in contact with all minds, why should not results be produced on the physical plane in answer to prayer ? There are a thousand ways in which God could help us without disturbing the government of the world. A physician cures disease, not by suspending laws, but by his superior knowledge enabling him to act through them. What are called miracles are simply instances of God's power working through higher laws. Moreover, things temporal and spiritual are bound together, and act and react upon each other. Strictly speaking there is no such distinction as secular and sacred, profane and hallowed. Everything is from God ; and it is the teaching of Jesus that no part of our life

must be considered outside the Father's loving interest and care.

Another feature in the apostle's serenity was the spirit of thanksgiving. Our requests are to be made known with thanksgiving. In asking for fresh mercies we are to remember past ones.

To be grateful and joyful is one of the first duties of the Christian. 'In everything,' says the apostle, 'give thanks.' All his letters, except that to the Galatians, begin with thanksgiving. Murmuring and complaining had no place in his life. Acquainted with bitter hardships and trials, he does not dwell upon his sufferings, but upon his joys. He turns his losses into gain by seeing in them tokens of the goodness of God. If 'the thorn in the flesh' is not removed, he blesses God for the strength that has been given him to bear it. If he is a prisoner at Rome, he is thankful that it has afforded him a wider sphere of usefulness. If there are enemies opposing him, he remembers with gratitude the great number of his fellow-helpers, who trust and love him. If he is cut off from the society of

his friends, it is a joy to receive their messages, and to think about them in his prayers. He blesses God upon all his remembrance of them. Always and everywhere he finds some occasion for gratitude. 'Whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it you turn it into a blessing. Could you therefore work miracles, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit.'¹

But this spirit of perpetual gratitude did not come easily. The apostle tells us that it was not a natural gift, nor was it the fruit of his conversion, for he had to learn it in the school of experience, probably through much suffering and prayer and repeated effort. 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.'² The force of the word is 'sufficient to oneself,' 'independent of external circumstances.' He found the source of comfort and contentment in himself. There was a fountain of joy in his own soul.

The unhappy and care-ridden are those who have few inward resources, and who depend

¹ Law's *Serious Call*, chap. xv.

² iv. 11.

upon external pleasures and hopes. The apostle lived for the great things of life, for love and truth and goodness. He felt the joy of his Master's service, and was too intent upon relieving the sufferings of others to be much concerned about his own. Have we not realized the truth of Keble's words—'When you find yourself overpowered, as it were, by melancholy, the best way is to go out and do something kind to somebody or other'?

And his thoughts moved in the eternal world. 'Let your moderation,' your gentle and forbearing spirit, 'be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.' Do not insist too strongly upon your rights: let the nearness of the end moderate your desires and ambitions; for these are the fruitful causes of anxiety. Money, distinction, pleasure, all will soon be over, therefore be reasonable. How trivial are the things that elate or trouble you when viewed in the light of eternity! 'The Lord is at hand.' He is near not only as a coming judge and deliverer, but as a present friend and helper. 'He is nigh unto all them that call upon Him.' 'His grace will

enable you to do and to endure all things.' This is a truth for all time, and especially for our own driven and hurried age. It is wonderful what a strength and calm come upon the troubled heart when it casts its burden upon the Lord; when we feel amidst the storms and stress of life that the Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath us are the everlasting arms.

Robert Louis Stevenson was one of the most cheerful of men, though he suffered for years with feeble and broken health. In his home at Samoa, he used to write prayers for public worship. The following is one of them, which we think all men might adopt: 'We thank Thee, Lord, for the glory of the late days, and the excellent face of Thy sun. We thank Thee for good news received. We thank Thee for the pleasures we have enjoyed, and for those we have been able to confer. And now, when the clouds gather and the rain impends over our house and our forest, permit us not to be cast down; let us not lose the savour of past mercies and past pleasures; but, like the voice of a bird singing in the

rain, let grateful memory survive in the hour of darkness. If there be in front of us any painful duty, strengthen us with the grace of courage ; if any act of mercy, teach us tenderness and patience.

XVIII

PEACE A DEFENCE

‘And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.’—iv. 7.

XVIII

PEACE A DEFENCE

THE great religions of the world offer to their disciples peace. One-third of the human race follows the doctrine of Buddha. The goal of their hopes is Nirvana, release from the sway of the passions, the cessation of feverish desires, even though it should involve the cessation of consciousness. Another great part of mankind has taken as the keynote of its religion Islam, which is interpreted resignation, rest in the supreme and righteous will of God. And in the Christian religion the most frequent promise of the Saviour was peace. This was the word most often upon His lips. He offered rest to the weary and heavy laden. His last bequest to His disciples was peace: 'My peace I leave with you.' In the world they had tribulation, but in Christ they had

peace. This was their constant watchword. It was their joy in life and their hope in death. And on their graves in the catacombs at Rome we may still read the simple and touching epitaphs almost everywhere recorded : 'Peace in Christ.'

But why this insistence upon peace ? The question would probably be answered by saying that it satisfies an inner need. Why does the eye desire light, the ear music, the heart love ? They were made for each other. But that is only part of the answer, and leaves untouched a most important truth.

In all God's works there is a purpose beyond beauty and happiness. The beauty of the flowers is essential to their existence. Bread means not only the satisfaction of hunger, but the preservation of life. Health is to be desired not only for the sake of joy, but because it is a state that repels disease, and is necessary to the vigour and activity of the body. Now peace is just the health of the soul by which evil is warded off. The apostle says, 'The peace of God shall guard your hearts and your thoughts,' literally shall 'stand

sentry' over them, to give warning and to drive back the enemy.

There is no doubt that this was the chief thought of Jesus when He spoke so often about peace. We are apt to see in His promises only a desire to give rest to the weary heart of man. But sympathy with suffering is not the highest form of love. Almost every day we hear of men and women casting away their lives to save their fellow creatures from distress and peril. These are inspiring examples, but there is a still higher devotion. The pre-eminence of our Lord's love lay in His sympathy with our moral condition, and in His consuming desire to save us from our sins. Greatly as He pitied human misery and longed to relieve it, His first concern was for the soul. He saw that all good came from the soul, and that to purify and ennoble it was the chief thing. Whatever maimed or injured the spiritual life must be renounced at any cost. Pain was not to be considered where the soul was concerned. The right eye must be plucked out, or the right hand cut off, if they caused us to stumble.

For this reason the Saviour warns us against restless and troubled thoughts. They are wasteful and destructive. In self-defence we must try to possess our souls in quietness and surround ourselves with an atmosphere of peace. It is one of the chief sorrows of life that so much of strength runs to waste in fretfulness and irritability. Powers that might be utilized for spiritual growth and helpful service are dissipated in worry. At such times we are not able to concentrate our thoughts upon our work. We cannot pray, or read our Bibles, nor can we open our minds to the calm and elevating influence of nature. Nor is the heart

At leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize.

Peace is not opposed to energy. The highest activity is consistent with perfect quietness of mind. Life might be symbolized by the machine which works best where there is the least possible friction. We have known those

Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.¹

The peace of God is a defence. We see this at a glance by observing the word in the context to which it is opposed—fear, anxiety: ‘Be anxious for nothing.’ Fear is a most dangerous ally. Under its influence we are led into all kinds of error and wrong. The first tampering with truth, the first departure from the strict lines of upright dealing, has often begun under the stress of anxiety. We are afraid of reproach and become cowards; we fear poverty and grow sordid, we are afraid of suffering and become selfish. But peace breaks this fatal companionship, and sets the soul free.

And by bringing joy into our life it becomes a source of strength. Many of our most subtle temptations arise from the want of inward satisfaction. A heart that is weary and ill at ease lies open to every temptation. Conscious

¹ Keble, *The Christian Year*.

of its own emptiness and disturbed by restless desires, it is ready to listen to any voice that offers it relief. How much of the vice and crime of our daily life is due to depression and misery ! Many find existence so wretched and disappointing that they are glad to end it in suicide. Multitudes fly to drink as an escape from the dreariness and monotony of life. Others seek relief in the excitement of gambling, or in the dissipation of coarse and sensual pleasures.

To brighten the lives of people is one means of elevating them. Happiness is not goodness, but it tends to promote it. Every increase of healthy joy is a source of strength, and an aid to virtue. We hear much about the temptations of pleasure, but what about the temptations of dullness ? Are we not like the children : safest when they are happy, but peevish, quarrelsome, and at every mischief when discontented ? We learn from experience how much health depends upon brightness. Shade and gloom mean sickness, and dullness brings disease. Light is the most potent agent in the destruction of malignant germs. Invisible foes

that infest our atmosphere, and breed pestilence in the darkness, are rendered harmless by the action of the sun. In soul as well as body there are germs of disease always present, and only waiting for favourable conditions to develop them. A lowered vitality, and the latent evil becomes active. Our spiritual defence is in the possession of a bright and happy experience, to feel joy in the midst of activity, peace at the heart of our struggles.

Human nature is always at its worst when it is agitated and worried. Let a man be at peace, and his better nature appears. When water is disturbed the sediment rises to the top, at rest it sinks to the bottom. When we are unrestful evil gains ascendancy, mingles with our higher thoughts, and darkens our view of things. Times of disquiet and discontent are times full of danger: they create a depressing atmosphere that frets and chafes the spirit. They narrow our outlook, and draw us in upon ourselves. It is at such seasons that the tempter appears, and that we are most open to evil suggestions. It is then that our thoughts

become unkind and our hearts embittered, that we refuse to forgive injuries, and speak much about the faults of others, and treasure up the little grudges of long ago. It is then that we murmur against our lot in life, complain that others are better off than ourselves, and perhaps feel bitterness towards them because of it. We think that we have been hardly dealt with, that Providence has not been just to us, and then that He does not exist. And losing faith in God we lose faith in all else—faith in man, faith in goodness and duty, faith in everything but our own selfish pleasures. Then the way is opened, and the only question that remains is how these selfish desires are to be gratified.

But the man who has the peace of God in his heart will be defended from all these things. He will not complain of his lot in life, for he knows that the heavenly Father is guiding him. He will not be unforgiving, because God has forgiven him. He will not envy the prosperity of others, for his own cup of happiness is full. He will not covet their prospects, because his own are so bright. A holy con-

tentment fills his life. The peace of God guards his heart and his thoughts.

All that is highest and best in the mind comes forth in peace as stars shine out in a tranquil sky. Storm and passion drive away our heavenliest thoughts; but in peace the mind discloses its beauty as flowers open to the sun. It is only in hours of peace that the voice of Jesus can be heard; or if it speaks in the storm it is when He is passing over the billows and saying 'Peace, be still.' What wonderful insight into the things of God is given to the peaceful mind! The tranquil soul receives the very image of its Lord. It is to the calm and brooding spirit that we owe the insight of the saints and the visions of seers and mystics. The wicked are like a troubled sea, and like a troubled sea they reflect nothing of the glory that is above them. But the man whose heart is at rest is as the tranquil lake that mirrors in its silent depths the beauty of earth and heaven.

And the mind that is full of peace is little prone to doubt and questionings. When religion is enjoyed, its mysteries do not trouble

us: we contemplate them and adore them. Confusion of thought is generally begotten of discontent. When we delight in the beauty and fragrance of the flowers, we are not anxious to begin digging up the garden and examining the roots. Inward peace swallows up doubt. When the Saviour appeared to the disciples after the resurrection, they asked no questions, though the manner of His appearance was so strange. It is simply said: 'The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord.'

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete.¹

What is the source of this peace? Let us learn it from Jesus, for He possessed it in all its fullness, and promised to bestow it upon His followers. Whence came the peace of Jesus?

His was not the peace of one who was secure in his possessions, who could say, 'Soul, take thine ease, . . . thou hast much goods laid up for many years.' Jesus possessed nothing. It was not the peace of home, that affords a sanctuary to the wearied and agitated mind.

¹ *In Memoriam.*

Home He had none. 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.' It was not the peace of retirement from the world, the false peace which refuses to look upon the misery of life, and shrinks from contact with its sorrows. Jesus mixed with the multitude, shared the conflicts of the city, opposed every wrong, and went about doing good. No life was ever more strenuous than His. It was not the peace of the Stoic, sought in the proud mastery of pain, in austere repressing the affections and resisting the impulse of pity. Jesus felt all, His heart was open to every sorrow. He shed tears over human suffering.

Whence, then, came His peace? It is spoken of as 'The peace of God which passeth all understanding.' Not only does it transcend human experience in its depth and intensity, but its source is beyond our understanding. It comes in a way contrary to our thought or anticipation. It is found where we least expect it. We think of peace as the fulfilment of desire; Jesus says it is the yielding

up of desire. To us it appears as release from labour and restraint. Jesus says it results from loving submission and devoted service. 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me.' It was not the peace of possession, but of surrender. 'Not My will, but Thine be done.' This higher peace is spoken of as the peace of God; God is its author, and if we earnestly seek it we shall obtain it.

Calm soul of all things, make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine
Man did not make, and cannot mar.
The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.¹

Faith in divine love; perfect trust in the will of the heavenly Father—that was the secret of the Saviour's immortal peace, and it must be ours. To the soul's searchings after peace there comes only one answer through all the ages. 'Trust in the Lord, and do good.' 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.'

¹ Matthew Arnold.

‘In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.’

XIX

THE INFLUENCE OF OUR THOUGHTS

‘ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think¹ on these things.’—iv. 8.

¹ Greek : ‘ take these things into account ’—consider and meditate upon them.

XIX

THE INFLUENCE OF OUR THOUGHTS

THIS is a subject upon which modern investigation has thrown a new and important light. The common notion is that our unspoken thoughts are of little consequence ; that they are merely airy nothings, shadows that flit across the mind and leave no trace behind them. No view could be more contrary to the teaching of facts. Within recent years much careful attention has been given to mental phenomena, and it has been demonstrated that even our silent thoughts can affect not only ourselves but others ; that just as messages can be sent without wires, so, under certain conditions, thoughts may be communicated to friends at a distance without any known physical medium.

The Psychical Society, which includes amongst its vice-presidents past and present a number of distinguished men of science, regards telepathy as an established fact. It has affirmed through its secretary that 'experiment proves that telepathy—the supersensory transference of thoughts and feelings from one mind to another—is a fact of nature.' A book has been recently written¹ offering a natural explanation of the remarkable phenomena of spiritualism. Scores of marvellous occurrences have been sifted by the Psychical Society, and the writer accepts these as correct. He then proceeds to trace them to the power which the mind possesses to project its thought through space. When those at home become aware, by dream, or vision, or some strange impression, of what has befallen their friends in a distant land, this is due, says the writer, to telepathy.

If then our thoughts lie open to unconscious suggestion and influence, both near and coming from afar, there is disclosed a wide view of hidden powers and possibilities. It is clear

¹ Podmore, *Naturalization of the Supernatural*.

that we may help others by thinking good thoughts concerning them, and send them silent messages of love and strength, or that we may weaken and injure them by our evil and antagonistic thoughts.

In the light of these facts the doctrine of good and bad angels contending for the soul of man is not so improbable as is sometimes supposed. It was firmly believed by St. Paul that outside our material surroundings there were hierarchies of spiritual beings who exerted a malign or benignant influence upon human affairs. He feared the invisible powers more than the visible ones.¹

The teaching of the apostle on this subject has been too lightly put aside as the mere survival of his Rabbinical training. But is there not an important truth contained in the doctrine? We are affected by mental influences emanating from persons on this planet; why not from those in other worlds, distant or near? We attract to ourselves forces that are akin to our own nature. 'The Prince of the world cometh,' said Jesus, 'and hath

¹ Eph. vi. 12, 13.

nothing in Me.' Evil had no power over Him, because there was nothing in His nature that responded to it. We guard our souls, said the apostle, from hostile beings, by taking unto ourselves the whole armour of God, that is, by cherishing the spirit of truth and love and faith.

It is certain that our silent and unspoken thoughts have a direct effect upon those around us for good and evil. We have all felt this. You go into certain company, and almost before a word is spoken you become conscious of a mental atmosphere that either elevates or depresses you. It might be possible for a minister of high spiritual sensitiveness, even if he were blindfolded, to know whether he was preaching to a spiritually-minded people or the reverse. How seldom is this considered! Instead of coming to the church as critics, we should remember that each one is responsible for bringing to the sanctuary his own thought-atmosphere, which may help or injure the souls of others by uplifting or letting down the worship of the whole congregation. But I do not propose to follow

this part of the subject any further. I desire rather to dwell upon the influence which our thoughts exert upon ourselves—upon our own life and character.

I. Consider the effects of our thoughts upon our physical life. When St. Paul wrote, 'To be carnally-minded (the mind of the flesh) is death; but to be spiritually-minded (the mind of the spirit) is life and peace,'¹ he was declaring a truth of far-reaching significance. The death of the body as well as of the soul; death now and here, as well as hereafter, follows as a consequence of carnal thinking. On the other hand, the spiritual mind sends a constant stream of renewing energy through the physical as well as through the spiritual life. The mind and the body are in such complete sympathy that whatever affects the one affects the other.

It is a psychological law that every thought is accompanied by some physical action. A familiar example of this is what is known as thought-reading. When an object is intensely thought about, there is an unconscious muscular

¹ Rom. viii. 6.

movement towards it, which a person 'in touch' will detect. Some physical change corresponds with every thought. Our thoughts may either cause or cure disease. Anger, grief, and fear were classed by Dr. Richardson among the influences most destructive of vitality. Depressing thoughts will cause the organs of the body to secrete poison. In this way a nursing mother may communicate sickness to her child. Cheerful and hopeful thoughts will often act more powerfully than drugs. A vivid thought has been known to turn the hair white in a single hour, to change or distort the features, and to produce 'stigmata,' or marks, upon the body. It is related of St. Francis of Assisi that he gazed so long and intently upon the image of the Crucified Saviour that the marks of the Passion became visible in his own hands and feet.

These instances were once dismissed as purely legendary, but it is now recognized that such physical changes may actually occur, under the stimulus of prolonged and concen-

trated thought.¹ The most eminent of our medical men take account of this law, and in curing disease always aim at enlisting the action of the mind. In an article on the 'Sacred Vocation of Nurses and Doctors,' one of our leading weekly journals² writes : 'The doctor who knows his business thinks of the will and character and disposition of his patient ; he tries always to get at these, to rouse some dormant mental or moral energy, to set going a train of spiritual movement which will in due time impress itself upon the bodily powers.'

The faith-healing, or mind-cure movement, by whatever name it is called, has laid hold of a great fact. Its vagaries and extravagancies must be met, not by ridicule, but by emphasizing the truth for which it stands. Its denial of physical treatment is an exaggerated protest against the tyranny of purely material remedies. Its strength lies in its insistence

¹ Professor Osler, *Principles of Medicine*, 4th edit., p. 1118.

² *The Spectator*.

upon the power of the spiritual life to influence our physical conditions. Teaching and healing have always gone together. In Egypt and Greece the functions of the priest and the physician were practically inseparable. The ancient prophet was the teacher and he was the healer. And in Eastern countries to this day, the Hakim, or wise-man, is also the physician. When our Lord was about to heal the sick He always acted through the mind, 'Believest thou that I am able to do this?' was His habitual question. He sought to bring into action a power of the soul. 'Thy faith hath made thee whole,' was His own remark. It was necessary that a spiritual force should be awakened in the mind. When that failed, when He could evoke no inward response, then, as the earliest tradition¹ tells us, He could do no mighty work.

Western thought is so completely steeped in the material world that it seems strange and incredible to most persons that spiritual forces should be able to do anything. Notwithstanding all our religious teaching, the great

¹ Mark vi. 5.

reality is held to be the body, and for practical purposes the soul is as nothing. And yet at any hour we may see its influence over our present physical conditions. It changes and transforms the body. The illuminating power of holy thought is impressed upon the features of the saint, and the man of debased mind stands revealed through all his disguises. What is this but the teaching of the first lesson in the Bible, which connects the beauty and vigour of man's bodily life with the purity of his mind? We are probably on the threshold of a great truth, which will become more and more clear as the ages go on, that the perfection of man's physical powers is mysteriously related to the renewing of his mind.

II. Let us now consider the effect of our thinking upon our character.

It is certain that all that a person ever becomes originates in his thought. If it were possible to look into a man's mind, to get behind his creed and conventional conversation and discover what he was habitually thinking about, his real self would be revealed to us. Find out his thoughts and you know the man.

Jesus laid stress upon the value of a single thought. He taught that even one evil thought, deliberately sanctioned, might corrupt the whole nature. And this truth is confirmed by modern knowledge. Tennyson, who was not only a poet, but also deeply conversant with modern science, writes—

Think well! Do-well will follow thought,
And in the fatal sequence of this world
An evil thought may soil thy children's blood.¹

Even one single thought is of importance, because it makes a readier passage for the next. There is a biological law which says that molecular motions travel by preference along beaten tracks. Every thought of good or evil cuts the channel deeper. Let but one thought of evil pass unresisted through the mind, and the way for the next is easier. It is commonly imagined that mental laws are uncertain in their action, because the process is not seen. Does the patient mark the progress of the internal malady that is slowly sapping his life? Or, we go down to the shore, and notice the ripple-marks on the

¹ The Ancient Sage.

sands: how did they come there? They were made by waves in the deeper sea that are never visible. And when the tide of our life recedes, and all its secret things are brought to light, it will be found that the permanent changes of habit and character were caused by currents of thought that were silent and hidden, and of which perhaps, we ourselves were barely conscious.

It is a solemn and momentous truth that every one becomes like his thoughts. As insects take the colour of the plants they feed upon, so we resemble the things we think about. A sour and vindictive temper is the result of brooding upon small grudges and petty irritations. The fires of lust are kept alive by sensual thinking. To become a miser we have only to dwell constantly upon money-making. In this fact lies one of the peculiar temptations of business life. The first condition of success is that a person should give his mind to his business, watch every point in expenditure, study markets, be always on the alert to meet competition. And yet the concentration of thought that makes the money,

tends to make the man its slave. His only defence is in mingling thoughts of business with higher interests, with aspirations after God, with thoughts of duty, kindness, and love, and by taking account of everything that is beautiful and true. 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; think on these things.'

Our subject touches the heart of a great mystery. It is sometimes urged that man is not a free agent; that he is driven along by motives that overpower his will. But how do these motives arise? It was his own thoughts that created them. And who determined his thinking? The man himself. Whatever becomes of the metaphysics of free-will, each one is conscious of the power to turn his thoughts to either good or evil: to fix his mind upon subjects that will enkindle dangerous passions, or upon those that will strengthen the highest aspirations. To develop this thought-power is the great aim of all training

and self-discipline. If it were fully possessed we should acquire an ascendancy over ourselves and the world that is scarcely dreamt of at present.

The strongest argument for Sunday observance is found not in the Fourth Commandment, but in the demands of our own nature. Throughout six days of the week we are engrossed in the material side of things; our minds are crowded with thoughts of business, politics, and pleasure. What opportunity is there of spiritual renewal, unless on one day of the week these things are firmly laid aside, and we draw near to God in quietness of mind, and surrender our thoughts to the eternal?

How is it that God and the unseen are so unreal to many? Because they seldom think about them. It is thought that makes everything vivid and real. If the dead are sometimes nearer to us than the living, it is because they are more present to our thoughts. Cease to think about a friend, and he fades out of your life. Those who only 'mind earthly things' come to believe in nothing else.

Those who think much about Christ find Him to be

A living, bright reality,
More present to Faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen.

To gain the power of turning our thoughts to the true and pure and lovely is the problem of life. The longer the habit is delayed, the greater the task. Therefore our first concern should be for the children. Their minds are open and tender, and susceptible to every impression. How carefully should we guard the conversation which they hear, the books that they read, the companionships that they form, the teaching that they receive! Jesus pronounced a woe upon those who caused a little one to offend. And what greater offence can be committed against childhood than to taint the mind with false or corrupt ideas? For a thought never really dies. It may be forgotten for a time, or may long lie dormant; but it lives in our blood, and is ready to spring up like the grains of wheat found in the Egyptian tombs, that grew into waving corn 3,000 years after. The indestructible character of our

thoughts is proved by the fact that in the hypnotic trance things that were buried in the subconscious mind are brought to life again.

Never did a greater responsibility rest upon parents and teachers. Never were there greater opportunities for making or marring childhood. Books are the great feeders of thought. The printing-press is an enormous power for good or evil. Sir Walter Scott said upon his death-bed that he was thankful that he had never written a word that could do any one harm. Many writers to-day will not have that consolation in their last moments. They will have to reflect that they have corrupted the innocent mind of childhood, and scattered broadcast the seeds of death. Ruskin tells us that his father would not allow him to look at a poor picture. Let us turn away from the ugly and the debased. Strange that people should read books which sully their thoughts; that they should be more scrupulous about a clean face than a clean mind. Yet a dirty mark upon the face may be instantly removed; but a stain upon the mind, like the blood upon Lady Macbeth's hand, can never be wiped out.

More than half the secret of right living is in putting ourselves under good influence, in keeping near to those who will strengthen what is best in us and give a high direction to our thoughts. We read, in the life of Robertson of Brighton, of a shopkeeper who, whenever he was tempted to do an unfair thing in trade, went into his parlour behind the shop to look at Robertson's portrait on the wall, and at once felt strong to resist. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. We overcome evil by thinking of the good. The mind cannot be kept swept and garnished. As the air rushes in to fill a vacuum, as weeds spring up in neglected soil, so do evil thoughts take possession of a vacant mind. Whatsoever things are true, and pure and lovely,—think on these things, says the apostle. And the word does not mean idle or listless thinking, but serious meditation. We are to train and discipline our minds to ponder these things until they tell upon our life.

It is to be feared that in the hurry of our Western life the practice of meditation is fast becoming a lost art. Even the habit of morn-

ing and evening prayer, which used to count so much with our fathers, is now often more of a form than a reality. Yet what could be more helpful than to close the eyes each night with a good thought in the mind, and to begin the fresh day with an earnest desire for strength, and in the words of a great statesman¹ who himself used to pass direct from the quiet communion of his own room to the stir and bustle of the House of Commons: 'To cultivate the habit of inwardly turning the thoughts to God, though but for a moment, in the course or during the intervals of business, which continually present occasions requiring His aid and guidance.'

¹ Mr. W. E. Gladstone to his son at Oxford in 1872.

RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,
BREAD STREET HILL, E.C., AND
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

Important New Volumes in Chas. H. Kelly's List

MODERN THEORIES OF RELIGION

By E. S. WATERHOUSE, M.A., B.D. Demy 8vo, cloth gilt, **5s.** net.

FIRST LESSONS IN PHILOSOPHY

By R. J. WARDELL. Large crown 8vo, cloth gilt, **3s. 6d.** net.

A self-contained text-book that can with confidence be recommended to the earnest student desirous of thoroughly grasping the elementary principles of philosophy.

THE WORLD'S ALTAR-STAIRS

Introductory Studies in the Religions of the World

By A. STANLEY BISHOP. Large crown 8vo, cloth gilt, **3s. 6d.** net.

STUDIES IN

MODERN CHRISTENDOM

By W. FIDDIAN MOULTON, M.A., and W. T. WHITLEY, M.A., LL.D., F.R.Hist.S. Large crown 8vo, cloth gilt, **3s. 6d.** net.

THE RISE OF THE PAPACY

By W. ERNEST BEET, M.A. Large crown 8vo, cloth gilt, **3s. 6d.** net.

THE SPIRITUAL SENSE IN SACRED LEGEND

By E. J. BRAILSFORD. Fernley Lecture, 1910. Large crown 8vo, cloth gilt, **3s. 6d.**

THE SUMMITS OF THE SOUL

By HENRY HOWARD, Author of 'The Raiment of the Soul.' Large crown 8vo, cloth gilt, **3s. 6d.**

THE SUPREME GRACE; or, The Praise of Love

By JAMES E. CRAWSHAW. Large crown 8vo, cloth gilt, **2s. 6d.** net.

CHARLES H. KELLY, 25-35 CITY ROAD, AND
26 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.

VOLUMES FOR PREACHERS

The Art of Illustration Illustrated

By JOHN EDWARDS

Large crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net

'Nothing is more valuable in the preacher's work than to make the truths he utters abide with his hearers; and the *art of illustration* is perhaps one of the greatest auxiliaries to the *art of persuasion*.'—*The Preacher*.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

By R. J. WARDELL

Large crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net

'An able and earnest attempt to present the fundamental principles of the gospel in a way that may commend them to the average mind. Well written, clearly thought out, and admirably adapted to the purpose it is designed to serve.'—*Review of Theology and Philosophy*.

A Manual for Local Preachers

By J. A. CLAPPERTON, M.A.

Small crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 1s. 6d. net

Deals with the preparation and delivery of sermons, and is also a guide to examinations and a preacher's reading.

'Helpful, business-like and practical, and condescends to details.'—*Holborn Review*.

The Young Preacher

By ISAAC E. PAGE

Small crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 1s. 6d. net

'This book contains a message from a brother to brothers—chiefly for the younger and humbler. Well I know the difficulties and struggles of my brethren—their early disadvantages, exacting daily tasks, lack of books and opportunity for self-improvement.'—*The Author*.

CHARLES H. KELLY, 25-35 CITY ROAD, AND 26 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.



BS Yorke, H Lefroy.
2705 The law of the spirit : studies in the
Y6 Epistle to the Philippians / by H. Lefroy
 Yorke. -- 1st ed. -- London : Kelly, 1910.
 317p. ; 21cm.

1. Bible. N.T. Philippians--Sermons.
I. Title.

